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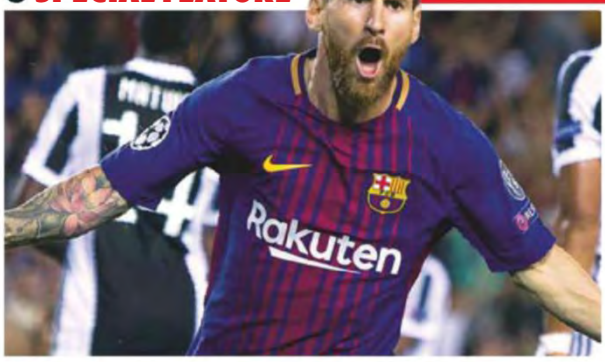

BARCELONA

Will Messi stay or will he go?

CLUB FOCUS

THE NEW DORTMUND

Young, gifted & back on top

HEADLINER

EDINSON CAVANI

The battle with Neymar

PLAYER BIOGRAPHY

PAULO DYBALA

The jewel in Juve's crown

PLUS

// Liechtenstein // Australia A-League preview
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Contents

October 2017

FEATURES

SPECIAL REPORT
26 Barcelona's boardroom problems

PLAYER BIOGRAPHY
38 Paulo Dybala

CLUB FOCUS
46 Borussia Dortmund

THE WORLD THIS MONTH
People in the news...on and off the pitch
4 In pictures
10 From the Editor
14 On the radar
16 **Paul Gardner** the diving witch-hunt goes on
18 **Keir Radnedge** Europe's real powerbrokers
20 **Edinson Cavani** PSG star's spat with Neymar
22 **Ins & outs** people on the move
24 **Brian Glanville** FA and the "hush money"

EYEWITNESS
32 Liechtenstein

6 OF THE BEST
36 Deadline-day signings

TALENT SCOUT
44 Seventeen-year olds

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL
54 Juventus start team

ROAD TO RUSSIA
56 Asia
58 Italy
59 Russia
60 Mexico
61 Ecuador

ARCHIVES
62 October 2001

THE GREAT MATCHES
82 West Germany v England, 1970

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See page 8

World Service

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67 Sint Maarten
Hurricane Irma devastation
68 Australia
A-League season preview
70 India
ISL grows as merger moves closer
72 Libertadores Cup
Barcelona cause a big upset

PLUS 66 Global diary 74 Results, tables, fixtures 80 Squads

In Pictures

The global game caught on camera

EGYPT...Al Ahly fans before their team's CAF Champions League quarter-final first leg against Esperance of Tunisia at the Borg El Arab Stadium near Alexandria

ARGENTINA...Frank Fabra celebrates scoring Boca Juniors' fourth goal against Velez Sarsfield

ITALY...Federico Viviani of SPAL scores with a free-kick against Napoli

SWEDEN...a Jonkoping Sodra fan lights a flare during an away game at IFK Gothenburg

SYRIA...fans watch the World Cup qualifier against Iran in the rebel-held town of Binnish, on the outskirts of Idlib

HOLLAND...Ajax's Mitchell Dijks (left) and Tyronne Ebuehi of Den Haag get in a tangle

SPAIN...fighter jets fly over Atletico Madrid's new Estadio Metropolitano prior to its inaugural game, against Malaga

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FROM THE EDITOR

Bayern Munich's sacking of Carlo Ancelotti (page 13) took many by surprise, though it was the style of his team's performances rather than the substance of their results that ultimately cost him his job after 15 months.

Ironically, Ancelotti has a reputation as a coach who is comfortable managing the egos of highly paid modern-day superstars. Yet elsewhere in Europe, player power seems on the wane. Arsenal and Liverpool were able to resist the transfer desires of Alexis Sanchez and Philippe Coutinho respectively, while Borussia Dortmund (page 46) were prepared to sideline Ousmane Dembele until an irresistible, over-the-odds offer from Barcelona.

> Ancelotti has a reputation as a coach who is comfortable managing the egos of highly paid modern-day superstars

At the continent's top clubs things are different. At PSG, Neymar's recent penalty tussle with Edinson Cavani (page 20) is a sideshow that could yet undermine the dynamics of a team with serious Champions League ambitions. Similarly at Barcelona (page 26), Lionel Messi's unsigned contract is the great unknown factor.

We have focused on club issues this month because deadlines prevented us from covering the latest World Cup games. Next month, we will have a much clearer idea of the qualifiers and play-off contenders.

See you then.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor

10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

1 Carlo Ancelotti dismissed by Bayern Munich p13
2 FA under fire after sacking women's coach Mark Sampson ..... p24 & 55
3 Saudi Arabia qualify for Russia 2018 ..... p56
4 Mexico reach seventh successive World Cup p60
5 Italy facing World Cup play-off p58
6 Caribbean football devastated by Hurricane Irma p67
7 Expanded Indian Super League starts p70
8 Libertadores Cup down to the last four p72
9 Juve's Agnelli facing one-year ban p10
10 Atletico Madrid open new stadium p10

SPAIN

Stunning...Atletico Madrid's new home

Madrid's new Metropolitano awarded 2019 Champions League Final

Atletico Madrid's new home, the recently opened 67,000-capacity Estadio Metropolitano, has been chosen to host the 2019 Champions League Final on June 1, 2019.

The stadium, on the outskirts of eastern Madrid, opened in September with Atletico beating Malaga 1-0 in La Liga.

UEFA also confirmed that Baku's Olympic Stadium, which had been the other shortlisted contender to stage the Champions League Final, will host the Europa League Final on May 29, 2019.

Istanbul's Besiktas stadium will host the European Super Cup on August 14, 2019.

ITALY

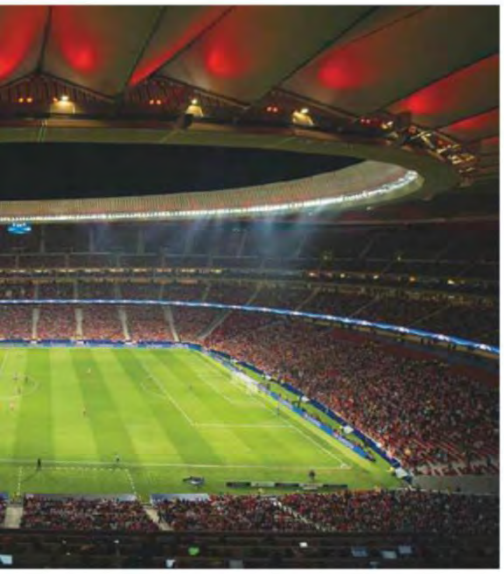
Juve's Agnelli to appeal one-year ban

Juventus will appeal against a ruling that handed a one-year ban and a €300,000 fine to club president Andrea Agnelli for his role in selling match tickets to "ultra" supporters who were allegedly connected to organised crime.

The ruling was handed down by the Italian

"My reaction to this situation is one of surprise as this is a club with a reputation for developing and promoting young Portuguese players"

Joaquim Evangelista, the head of Portugal's players' union, is shocked as Vitoria Guimares field an entire team of non-Europeans in a Europa League tie against Red Bull Salzburg



federation's Disciplinary Court, which had prepared a case against Agnelli and three other club officials on the basis of evidence gathered by Turin-based public prosecutors investigating mafia infiltration in the Piedmont region.

Juventus said that it would appeal the ruling "in the firm belief that the club is in the right". Agnelli denies any wrongdoing, arguing that the fans with whom he had met were not involved in criminal activity and there had been nothing clandestine about his meeting with them.

The ruling came less than a month after Agnelli was appointed chairman of the European Club Association (ECA), succeeding Karl-Heinz Rummenigge. It remains unclear how, if at all, Agnelli's role at the ECA will be affected by his suspension, which essentially applies to Juventus-related duties.

Paddy Agnew

Banned... Andrea Agnelli

HEROES & VILLAINS

Return... Alan Ruschel

ALAN RUSCHEL

One of only three survivors of the Chapecoense plane crash last year, the 28-year-old defender made his first competitive appearance since the disaster in a 0-0 draw with fellow Brazilian side Flamengo in the Sudamericana Cup. Ruschel played for 73 minutes before he was replaced, having been an unused sub in Chapecoense's league loss to Cruzeiro the previous week.

OMAR AL SOMA

Marked his return to Syria's national team after a five-year absence with a late equaliser to clinch the 2-2 draw with Iran that sealed a place in the World Cup play-offs.

SAMI KHEDIRA

The Germany midfielder bought 1,200 tickets for his country's World Cup qualifier against Norway and gave them to children fighting cancer and socially disadvantaged youngsters in his native Stuttgart, where the game was played.

PATRICK MULLINS

Scored the fastest four goals in MLS history, taking just 31 minutes of DC United's win against San Jose Earthquakes.

Quick four...DC United's Patrick Mullins (right)

CELTA VIGO

The Spanish club were fined by La Liga for not having enough fans at home matches and breaking the league rule that states 70 per cent of their stadium should be full.

AUSTRIAN LEAGUE ADMINISTRATORS

Ghanaian striker Bernard Tekpetey was given a two-match ban after being sent off for his reaction to alleged racist insults from Union Gurten fans while playing for Altach.

HATEM BEN ARFA

The striker threatened Paris Saint-Germain with legal action after being demoted to the club's reserve team.

Unhappy...Hatem Ben Arfa

Noise annoys... Timo Werner (left)

TIMO WERNER

RB Leipzig's striker asked to be substituted in a Champions League game because the noise from Besiktas fans in Istanbul was too loud.

"Neymar has peed from the diving board. And we can't accept this. At least we need to open up a file. This needs to be investigated"

La Liga president Javier Tebas on the Brazilian's €222m move from Barcelona to Paris Saint-Germain

GOALS we'd like to see again

1 IVAN PERISIC
Internazionale v SPAL
Left-footed volley from just inside the penalty area following a cross by Danilo D'Ambrosio.

2 MUNAS DABOUR
Red Bull Salzburg v Rapid Vienna
A well-worked team goal finished off with an acrobatic volley following a teasing cross by Stefan Lainer.

3 IBSON MELO
Maritimo v Rio Ave
Controls Rodrigo Pinho's flick over a defender on his chest before neatly finishing.

4 STEVEN BERGWIJN
PSV v Utrecht
Dribbles past four defenders before rounding the goalkeeper and slotting home.

5 ENZO PEREZ
River Plate v Jorge Wilstermann
Beats three defenders before dinking the ball over the keeper.

6 CHEMA
Levante v Real Sociedad
Meets a cross from Jose Morales with a stunning volley from outside the penalty area.

WINNERS

IGNACIO SCOCCO
River Plate striker was the first man this century to get five goals in one Libertadores Cup game.

ZAMBIA
Ended a 35-year run of not scoring against Algeria with back-to-back World Cup qualifying victories.

PERU
Won three World Cup qualifiers in a row for the first time in 20 years, with victories over Ecuador and Bolivia adding to March's win v Uruguay.

LOSERS

ADRIEN SILVA
The midfielder's move from Sporting to Leicester City for £22m missed the transfer deadline by 14 seconds.

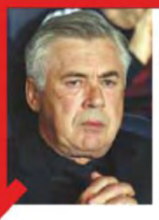
CAMEROON
The African champions failed to qualify for the World Cup finals after dropping five points to Nigeria.

GUANGZHOU EVERGRANDE
Scored five goals against Shanghai SIPG in the AFC Champions League but then lost on penalties.

"We were not far away from signing him but it didn't work out. The dossier is now closed"

Shu Yuhui, president of Chinese side Tianjin Quanjian, insists he will not make another bid for Borussia Dortmund striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang (right)

HEADLINER: Carlo Ancelotti



Italian coach sacked after Bayern's lacklustre start

Defeat at PSG was the final straw

The day after Bayern Munich suffered their worst-ever Champions League defeat, 3-0 away to Paris Saint-Germain, Carlo Ancelotti was sacked, dispatched before the end of September by a club hierarchy alarmed at the team's below-par performances.

Ex-Bayern players turned pundits had been having a field day selling doom and gloom about Ancelotti's team. Paul Breitner claimed the Bayern class of 2017-18 had taken a "backwards step". Lothar Matthaus believed the Bavarians may not win a single piece of silverware this season. Mario Basler predicted that Ancelotti would be packing his bags for China in January.

No one was surprised that the critics were stalking the German champions like a lion in pursuit of a gazelle. Bayern have yet to move out of second-gear this season, too often lacking in cohesion, fluidity and precision. Lacklustre both with and without the ball.

Especially worrying for Ancelotti's Bayern was their inability to break down teams who defended deep and in numbers. Throughout their recent 2-0 Bundesliga defeat at Hoffenheim they were inexplicably reticent to flood the opposition box, and in the 3-0 home win over 10-man Anderlecht in the Champions League they struggled to make their numerical advantage count.

In particular, a lot of flak was aimed at Ancelotti for his 4-3-3 starting line-up. No Franck Ribery, Arjen Robben, Mats Hummels or Jerome Boateng. In midfield, Arturo Vidal, Corentin Tolisso and Thiago were overwhelmed, while out wide, James Rodriguez and Thomas Muller showed they are not really wingers.

Winning is not enough in the rarified air at Bayern. They also must do so with a certain style.

Running parallel to these poor performances was the constant murmurings of discontent: attacking-third "space finder" Muller lamenting that Ancelotti did not appreciate him; ace striker Robert Lewandowski describing the club's recruitment policy as not sufficiently bold; wide man Ribery furiously throwing his shirt to the ground after being substituted against Anderlecht; players openly remonstrating with one another on the pitch.

Stopped... Bayern's Arturo Vidal (left) runs into PSG's Angel Di Maria

Too many personal agendas emerged as "Me, myself and I" replaced the famous Bayern motto of "*Mia san mia*" ("we are who we are").

Ancelotti was unable to get anything right. He was pilloried for his rotation policy, his disciplinary shortcomings and for failing to stamp his mark on the side.

> "We're neither in tip-top shape or the lowest of the low. We're not yet in absolute top form but we soon will be"
>
> **Unfortunately for Ancelotti, he wasn't given the time to make his prediction come true**

Over...Carlo Ancelotti's last game in charge of Bayern

He may have won the title in his first season in charge, but some 14 months into his reign the team still did not have a recognisable pattern of play.

Assistant coach Willy Sagnol assumed temporary control of first-team affairs while rumours abound that Hoffenheim coach Julian Nagelsmann will be at the Allianz-Arena controls next season.

Usually so affable and zen-like, Ancelotti had become increasingly tetchy. At a press conference prior to a 4-0 home win over Mainz, he sarcastically took on his detractors: "I'm not going to individually answer all those who have been criticising our tactics and philosophy. I just want to take this opportunity to thank them for the suggestions and tips.

"At the end of the season I'm going to invite them all to a big party and there we can discuss it all, including tactics.

"We're neither in tip-top shape or the lowest of the low. We're not yet in absolute top form but we soon will be."

Unfortunately for Ancelotti, the Bayern hierarchy did not share his optimism.

Nick Bidwell

"It shouldn't be forgotten that it has saved European football"

FIFA chief Gianni Infantino defends the concept of financial fairplay

Bruno FERNANDES (Sporting)

Sporting fans rightly questioned the credentials of the 23-year-old when he was signed from Sampdoria this summer for €8.5million.

The former Boavista trainee was raised in Italian football with Novara and Udinese, before impressing last season at Samp. But any doubts about the midfielder were wiped out as he scored five goals in his first six league games in Sporting's unbeaten start to the season.

Called into the Portugal squad for the first time in August, he has been compared to ex-Sporting playmaker Joao Mario, who is now at Internazionale, and his impressive start at the Estadio Jose Alvalade has meant Adrien Silva – the subject of a botched transfer to Leicester City – has not been missed.

Pietro PELLEGRI & Eddy SALCEDO (Genoa)
These two highly promising teenagers have made their debuts for Genoa this season, with 16-year-old, 6ft 4in forward Pellegri scoring three goals in his first four games, and 15-year-old attacking midfielder Salcedo already being courted by Juventus, Internazionale and Milan.

Federico VALVERDE (Uruguay)
The 19-year-old scored on his international debut to end Uruguay's six-match winless streak as they stunned hosts Paraguay 2-1 in World Cup qualifying.

Simone ZAZA (Valencia)
The Italian striker, who was a goalless flop in the Premier League last season, scored five goals in the first six Liga games this term.

Claudio RANIEIRI (Nantes)
The former Leicester City manager saw his French side enjoy an unbeaten five-game run, taking 13 points from 15 games as they climbed up the Ligue 1 table.

Josh SARGENT (USA)
A member of the USA squad for the Under-17 World Cup in India, the striker will join Bundesliga side Werder Bremen when he turns 18 in February.

Timo WERNER (Germany)
His two goals against Norway meant he has scored six in his first eight games for Germany – equalling the achievement of Pierre Littbarski, who also scored a brace against Norway, in 1982.

Clinton N'JIE (Marseille)
The Cameroon forward scored five Ligue 1 goals for Marseille in the space of 208 minutes – at an average of one every 42 minutes – which is more than he managed in all of last season.

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Paul GARDNER

THE WORLDWIDE VIEW

The diving witch-hunt strikes again

Fall guy...Chelsea's Willian (in blue) is clipped by Hector Bellerin of Arsenal

We're all pretty accustomed to football clampdowns by now. As a new season starts, or a World Cup rolls around, the league authorities or FIFA tell us that referees have been instructed to keep an eye out for, and to sternly punish, some specific offence. These have ranged from important things like tackling from behind and surrounding referees, to more trivial matters such as making sure players tuck their shirts in.

At the start of a new season the clampdown is applied vigorously. Halfway through, the initial zeal of the referees slackens – possibly because the clampdown is working – and by the end of the season it has been forgotten.

My feeling is that most clampdowns are justified, that they respond to a general feeling that some particular aspect of the sport is getting out of hand and needs to be reined in. But as is usual with anything involving refereeing or the rules, the action is always delayed and the clampdowns arrive a year or two later than they should do.

However, my generally benign acceptance of this ramshackle clampdown procedure has its limits. Those limits are left way behind by the Premier League's persistent campaign against "simulation" or diving. The latest version of this campaign entails the post-game study of videos and the unearthing of dives that the referee missed and the suspension of the culprits.

As this zero-tolerance campaign goes on, it would be useful to know just how prevalent diving is in the Premier League. Is this an every-game occurrence? Or maybe once every 10 games? We don't know as the necessary statistics don't exist. Nonetheless, a full-scale campaign is underway without any solid proof that it is needed.

Looking at the offence itself, it is not a physical offence. No opponent is going to be injured, it involves only deception. This is condemned as cheating, which immediately moves the offence into a different category. It is now seen as morally wrong. Enter the moralists, with their puritanical intolerance.

Now the clampdown turns ugly and becomes a witch-hunt.

Witch-hunts are unpleasant procedures. The blind fervour with which they are conducted leads

> This ramshackle clampdown procedure has its limits. Those limits are left way behind by the Premier League's persistent campaign against "simulation" or diving

inevitably to gross errors and the condemnation of innocents. At its worst, a witch-hunt becomes less interested in stamping out the supposed crime than in punishing the sinners alleged to have committed it.

For the traditional, early-August curtain-raiser to the English season, Bobby Madley was put in charge of the Community Shield game between Arsenal and Chelsea at Wembley. He is one of England's top refs, so his duty was to set the refereeing model for the upcoming season.

Pity about that, for Madley made a right royal mess of things.

Given the witch-hunt, it was always likely that Madley would be looking for dives – and he found one in the 38th minute, duly yellow-carding Chelsea's Willian. But the call was horrendously wrong.

Replays showed that Willian was tripped by Arsenal's Hector Bellerin, a slight contact that knocked Willian's moving leg against the back of his standing leg.

Chelsea should have had a penalty, but the main concern is not the scoreline but the sheer arrogance of Madley's call – a potentially game-changing call that flew in the face of what actually happened.

So the innocent Willian was tarred as a sinner. And Madley, who wrongly condemned him? Nothing has happened to him. Barely a word of criticism has been heard.

Yes, of course, diving must be punished – but it must not be viewed as a uniquely heinous moral crime that has to be eliminated at all costs.

That way lies the odious witch-hunt, and football should not be stooping that low. WS

In the spotlight...referee Bobby Madley

REPORTS WE COULDN'T MAKE UP

1 MAY THE WOLVES BE WITH YOU

American actor Mark Hamill, who played Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars*, has become a fan of English second-tier side Wolverhampton Wanderers...by accident.

After the 66-year-old "liked" a suggestion from a fan on Twitter that he could support Wolves, he admitted that he "thought they meant the animal". However, he then realised that "everyone got so excited – I had to be a fan".

After being made aware of the social media chat, the club said: "The force is certainly strong at Molineux at the moment, with the team making an excellent start to the season, and it was perhaps fitting that the game against Millwall finished Obi Wan-Nil."

Goal...Youssoufa Moukoko celebrates scoring against Austria

Wolves fan... Mark Hamill

Close shave... Marco Asensio

2 AGE A CONCERN FOR YOUNG STAR

The father of a 12-year-old boy who scored three times in two games for Germany's under-16 side has had to answer doubts about his son's age.

Cameroon-born Youssoufa Moukoko, who had scored 13 goals in five games for Borussia Dortmund's under-17s, scored on his debut against Austria and then scored twice more against the same side two days later.

According to his official birth certificate, Moukoko was born on November 20, 2004 in Cameroon, and his father, Joseph, says: "Straight after the birth, I registered him at the German embassy in Yaounde. We have a German birth certificate."

According to the German Football Association, there have been "a number of intensive discussions with Borussia Dortmund at various levels," and "there is no doubt about the correctness of the age of the player".

3 A SPOT OF BOTHER

Marco Asensio had to miss Real Madrid's opening Champions League group game after he shaved his legs and a spot became infected.

"He has a pimple on his leg which means he cannot lift his sock," said coach Zinedine Zidane of the 21-year-old.

With Asensio cut from their squad, defending champions Madrid were still able to slice through APOEL of Cyprus, winning 3-0 at the Bernabeu.

5 TWO-GOAL JOZY MISSES PARTNER'S OPEN WIN

USA international footballer Jozy Altidore scored twice for his club side Toronto in their 4-0 win against San Jose Earthquakes in the MLS at the same time as his partner, tennis player Sloane Stephens, was winning her first Grand Slam title, the US Open.

Altidore was at Flushing Meadow to see Stephens win her semi-final against Estonia's Kaia Kanepi in straight sets but was then on football duty with his team and therefore missed her Final win, when she beat Madison Keys 6-3, 6-0.

Slam...Sloane Stephens

Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

Clubs remain Europe's real powerbrokers

In 2008 the newly appointed UEFA president, Michel Platini, decided the European federation's clubs committee was a waste of time and that the clubs should be kicked into the outer darkness. Hence the creation of the European Club Association (ECA) after negotiations that saw the disbanding of the G-14 group, whose big-money super-league sabre rattling had become an increasing nuisance.

Platini thought that an expanded clubs body, with many more teams from lower down the financial scale, would effectively neuter all that sort of nonsense. In fact, quite the opposite happened.

Led by Bayern Munich's Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, the ECA quickly made its weight felt by forcing FIFA to accept the logical need for clubs to receive "recompense" payments for players absent at international tournaments and by driving an ever-harder bargain with UEFA over club-competition revenues.

Rummenigge, who has now retired from the post to concentrate on Bayern, was an effective ECA leader who found a balance between the differing needs of the different strata of clubs. He also earned ECA two slots on the UEFA executive and half the members of the UEFA/ECA group which runs the club competitions' company.

But the key feature is that the 200-plus ECA members do not represent the rank and file of all Europe's clubs; they only represent those clubs who compete regularly in Europe and therefore benefit from the largesse of the Champions League and Europa League.

That the ECA is only the G-14 writ large was underscored when it elected as president the Juventus boss Andrea Agnelli, who made it clear where his interests lay with his thoughts on European club football's most lucrative competition.

"I am comfortable in stating that the majority is in favour of the Champions League as it is, and also for the 2021-24 cycle which will give it some stability going forward," said Agnelli.

In and out... Andrea Agnelli (right) and Karl-Heinz Rummenigge

"We are not expecting a soap opera going forward as the Champions League cycle is pretty much set for 2021-24. Stronger teams becoming stronger is not an issue, though there are elements that need to be addressed."

Agnelli also struck a tone on transfer spending which will be welcomed by the rich clubs of the "Big Five" leagues.

Asked about Paris Saint-Germain's extravagant acquisitions of Neymar and Kylian Mbappe, he said: "If the system is healthy then those transactions are fair.

"This year's numbers just confirmed the growth rate we had for the past seven years."

Agnelli also appeared to suggest that UEFA's Financial Fairplay regulations should be eased still further – directly contradicting the expressed concerns of UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin.

> "Stronger teams becoming stronger is not an issue"
> ECA president Andrea Agnelli

The new ECA president said: "As a business manager you should be looking at the balance sheet and value creation in the long term, and not the profit-and-loss statement. That was a perfect tool to address the debt delays and overall losses of the system. Now that has been tackled, what are the best set of rules going forward?"

Agnelli also reiterated the long-running ECA whinge that greater restrictions were needed over national-team fixtures. He thought further discussion should be undertaken with FIFA and UEFA.

The suspicion has always been that, if national-team competition withered on the vine the ECA would not care. Certainly players' individual achievements at World Cups and European Championships raise their transfer values, but then high-profile goals and glory raise their wage demands too. WS

IOC repeating FIFA's mistakes

Any time soon, sentencing of more than 30 of the FIFAgate flock will begin in New York.

A majority have pleaded guilty in the hope of mitigating their likely sentences by telling all they know. A handful are pleading not guilty, and their trials may be used by those who admitted bribery and corruption to delay sentencing.

Either way, whatever emerges will cast a new pall over the world federation, even though president Gianni Infantino will shrug it off as a legacy of a corrupt old order. But FIFA in particular, and international sport in general, cannot throw off the shackles of scandal so simply.

Consider the International Olympic Committee. When Sepp Blatter's house of cards was blown down in May 2015, FIFA Congress was urged by IOC president Thomas Bach to waste no time bringing in a swath of governance reforms.

Bach's address, describing how the IOC had cleaned up its act after the Salt Lake City vote-rigging scandal, was unfortunately sanctimonious in tone. This is because it now appears the Olympic movement had not cleaned up its own act at all.

In the wake of last year's Games there have been allegations about a Russian doping cover-up and vote-rigging by Rio bid bosses to win the election back in October 2009.

Cynics will suggest this proves that the vast sums of money washing around high-profile international sport have tainted football, athletics and the rest beyond redemption.

FIFA has no defence even now. The ethics committee appears to have ceased active duty ever since Hans-Joachim Eckert and Cornel Borbely were sacked as judge and inquisitor by congress in May.

Yet, perversely, FIFA has democratised its host-award system more effectively, in practical terms, than the IOC. The Olympics of 2024 and 2028 have been awarded to Paris and Los Angeles respectively after Bach and his ruling cabal sidestepped the 100-plus members of the IOC entirely. FIFA, by contrast, will ask its 200-plus members to vote on its next award in congress after stripping the council of that right following the 2018-2022 scandal.

However, both organisations cannot continue to sidestep some long-standing disciplinary issues.

FIFA needs to take action over Brazilian CBF president Marco Polo del Nero, indicted by the US DoJ but still allowed to run the football show in Rio. Similarly the IOC must deal with bribery allegations against Sheikh Ahmad Al Fahad Al Sabah of Kuwait, who was also forced to give up his FIFA Council post this year.

Ethics in sport should be about actions, not words. FIFA and the IOC both have a long way to go.

IOC president... Thomas Bach

Transfer window has always been controversial

Premier League clubs have voted to close the 2018 summer window for buying players on the Thursday before the first game of that season, which will be on August 9.

However, players can still be sold abroad up until the standard August 31 deadline, which puts English top-flight teams at the mercy of predatory clubs in Europe's other big leagues. And next year dealing time will be restricted as the World Cup does not end until July 15.

The concept of transfer windows has always been controversial in the English game.

An earlier control was the spring deadline, around the end of March, after which new signings could not play in games with relevance to promotion or relegation. These were the days of 22-team divisions and "two up, two down", when half of the clubs were playing the last weeks without ambition or fear.

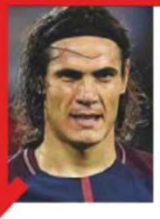
Record signing... Mel Charles

Arsenal once signed Mel Charles after the spring deadline simply to foil the advances of Tottenham Hotspur. Charles had to sit out the last weeks of the 1958-59 season after his then-record £42,750 arrival from Swansea, playing in just a handful of friendly matches.

"Lions are not interested in the opinion of sheep"

USA midfielder Michael Bradley brushes off criticism of the national team's performances from former international defender Alexi Lalas

HEADLINER: Edinson Cavani



A duel he can't win

Uruguayan striker battles with Neymar for PSG's top spot

You have to feel for Edinson Cavani. His on-field spat with Neymar during Paris Saint-Germain's 2-0 victory over Lyon in September made headlines for all the wrong reasons. The pair argued over who would take free-kicks and a 79th-minute penalty. When Cavani finally won the battle of wills, he proceeded to smash the spot-kick against the bar.

Highly displeased, rumours abounded that Neymar had demanded the club ship out the Uruguayan at the first opportunity. Although peace broke out the following week, it is not the first time Cavani has found himself having to fight his corner to get the respect he believes he deserves in the French capital.

Although PSG paid €64million to bring the 26-year-old to France from Napoli in July 2013, the capital club already had Zlatan Ibrahimovic in its ranks – and it quickly became clear that the Swede had no intention of being usurped as top dog.

Forced to play out wide when his clear preference was to be used as a traditional centre-forward, Cavani was always a valued member of the PSG team but lagged way behind Ibrahimovic in the "first name on the team sheet" stakes.

It was no secret that Cavani was unhappy at being shunted out on the flank, so when Ibrahimovic left to join Manchester United in July 2016 the Uruguayan saw his big chance to finally establish himself as the club's undisputed star striker.

With Angel Di Maria providing the ammunition, Cavani scored 35 goals in Ligue 1 last season. But although it was an impressive haul, it wasn't enough to prevent Monaco from snatching the title. Cavani also scored eight goals in eight Champions League games, but then PSG crashed out in spectacular fashion, losing 6-1 away to Barcelona in the round of 16 after winning the first leg 4-0. And any guesses who scored two late, late goals at Camp Nou? Why, Neymar of course...

Cavani scores goals, there's no doubt about that, but he has been criticised for some time in France over his chances-to-goals ratio, with even his staunchest supporters having to admit that he does often miss chances that he really should put away.

It is said that the on-field spat with Neymar was resolved when another Brazilian, the full-back Dani Alves, organised a "clear the air" players' dinner at the Victoria Paris restaurant three days after the Lyon game. There were also reports that Cavani had been offered a €1m, one-off payment to hand penalty duties to Neymar – which he declined.

Neymar later apologised for his behaviour, while PSG's Unai Emery admitted such arguments were hardly surprising. "They're two very competitive players," said the coach. "They want the best for the team, but they also have individual objectives, which is natural."

Emery may be on to something here. If, as is rumoured, Cavani has a clause in his contract that states he'll receive a bonus of €1m if he is Ligue 1's top scorer, it would be fair to assume that Neymar has something similar, so the impulse to snatch every free-kick and penalty may not just be down to competitive spirit and superstar ego.

> "They want the best for the team, but they also have individual objectives, which is natural"
>
> PSG coach Unai Emery

Even though Cavani is playing second fiddle once again, it looks unlikely that he will be moved on any time soon – with or without Neymar's influence.

With his annual salary around the €9m mark it would be hard to find another club prepared to stump up that kind of cash for a 30-year-old. And given that Cavani extended his contract with the club until 2020 in April last year, he seems happy to stay put in Paris for the time being.

The player himself has, however, talked of departing the club at some point in the future, suggesting a return to Italy could be on the cards before going back to South America.

"If I decide to change clubs I could well go back to Napoli before heading back to Uruguay," says Cavani.

"After spending so many fantastic years there it's normal to want to go back 'home' one day."

Howard Johnson

Spat...Cavani and Neymar have words during the Lyon game

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"It is a pity that we had to remove a coach who only a few months ago led us to the league title"

Anderlecht director of operations Jo Van Biesbroeck on the sacking of coach Rene Weiler (left)

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Appointments, sackings and loans

IN

Second chance ...Nigel Pearson

Liga job... Gianni De Biasi

EUROPE

ROY HODGSON, who had been out of management since resigning as England boss after a Euro 2016 defeat by Iceland, replaced Frank De Boer at Crystal Palace.

GIANNI DE BIASI, who took Albania to the finals of Euro 2016, took over from Luis Zubeldia as coach of Alaves, who lost their first four games in La Liga this season without scoring. Villarreal promoted B team boss **JAVIER CALLEJA** after sacking Fran Escriba.

Former Mainz boss **MARTIN SCHMIDT** replaced Andries Jonker at Bundesliga strugglers Wolfsburg.

COSMIN CONTRA left his role as coach of Dinamo Bucharest to replace Christoph Daum in charge of Romania's national team.

Defending Greek champions Olympiakos appointed **TAKIS LEMONIS** after firing Besnik Hasi following a 3-2 loss to AEK.

Former Ivory Coast defender **KOLO TOURE**, who played 17 games for Celtic last term, joined the Scottish club's coaching staff.

Sacked by Leicester City in 2015, **NIGEL PEARSON** was named coach of Belgian second-tier side OH Leuven – who, like the Premier League club, are owned by King Power International.

SOUTH AMERICA

JORGE CELICO was appointed interim coach of Ecuador.

JORGE DA SILVA replaced Hernan Torres in charge of Colombian side America de Cali.

AFRICA

PHAKAMANI MAHLAMBI will become the first South African to play in Egypt after joining Al Ahly from Bidwest Wits in his homeland.

ASIA

Englishman **GARY WHITE** was appointed coach of Chinese Taipei's national team.

Cali calling...America boss Jorge Da Silva

Quit...Gus Poyet

OUT

EUROPE

RENE WEILER, who guided Anderlecht to the Belgian title last term, was sacked after a poor start to this season. Oostende dismissed **YVES VANDERHAEGHE**.

Ross County sacked manager **JIM MCINTYRE** with the team 10th in the Scottish Premiership.

CONCACAF

New England Revolution parted company with coach **JAY HEAPS**.

Santos Laguna fired coach **JOSE MANUEL DE LA TORRE** after just one win in their opening nine games in the Mexican Apertura.

AFRICA

Former France midfielder **ALAIN GIRESSE** resigned as coach of Mali.

ASIA

Former Brighton & Hove Albion boss **GUS POYET** quit as coach of Chinese club Shanghai Shenhua.

Gone...Jay Heaps left New England

Russia bound... Edgardo Bauza

Bauza replaces Van Marwijk as boss of Saudi Arabia

EDGARDO BAUZA left his post with the United Arab Emirates' national side to replace Bert Van Marwijk as coach of Saudi Arabia. The former Argentina boss was only in charge of the UAE for four months, having replaced Mahdi Ali in May.

Despite steering Saudi Arabia to their first World Cup in 12 years, Van Marwijk was shown the door after a disagreement over the Dutchman's role in the run-up to next year's finals in Russia.

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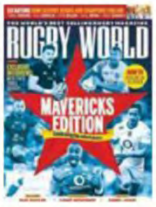

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Brian GLANVILLE

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

United...England celebrate their first goal against Russia with coach Sampson

Feeble FA must answer questions over 'hush money'

The Mark Sampson affair could obviously run and run. That Sampson should have been fired from his post as manager of the England women's team hot on the heels of a triumphant 6-0 conquest of Russia in the World Cup qualifiers added a fresh dimension of irony to a controversy which seems to defy logic.

Certainly the women who thrashed the Russians seemed to have no doubt about their solidarity, even affection, for their coach – as vividly illustrated when they rushed to hug him after scoring the first of their half-dozen goals.

Yet one leading player after another had fallen by the wayside in the recent past, of whom none were more involved than the much-capped Eni Aluko. The salient question which remains fully to be explained is, why Aluko was paid that huge "hush money" amount of £80,000?

It scarcely seems to have hushed her, as she loudly and publicly trumpeted the case of Sampson, who when told her relatives were coming from Nigeria to watch an England game allegedly replied: "Well make sure they don't come over with Ebola."

Crude and gratuitous, but an insult worth £80,000? No one at the FA has begun to explain or justify such a payment; which if it were supposed to gag Aluko has certainly failed in its intent.

Through all this, the chief executive of the FA, Martin Glenn, has cut a pretty feeble figure. He insists that, though aware of a report on original accusations against Sampson, he did not take action until quite recently. It would not, he bizarrely said, have been "standard procedure" for him to enquire further about a potentially sensitive matter.

There had been problems for Sampson when previously coaching at the Bristol Academy, when he was sent on an FA Education course. But Glenn says it didn't occur to him to ask why Sampson had been under investigation.

Glenn has cut a pretty dismal figure, but there are others who seem to have turned a blind eye to matters, not least Dan Ashworth, who presided over coaching and development, and Trevor Brooking, who presided over Sampson's appointment.

No, this was not "an appalling race controversy" as some idiot wrote in *The Guardian*.

Storm in a tea cup? That could well be closer to the point. But £80,000?

Glenn, the latest in a long line of inadequates

There have been calls for Martin Glenn to be replaced, which seems logical enough, but looking historically at the long succession of inadequate chief executives at the FA, Glenn's inadequacy merely seems par for the course.

Arguably, there hasn't been a decent incumbent since Stanley Rous gave up the secretaryship, as it was then known, to become president of FIFA in 1962.

The obvious successor then appeared to be Walter Winterbottom, very much Rous' protege, and controversially the England team manager since 1946 who was protected by Rous against any harm following even the most catastrophic of England results – notably the humiliating defeats, 6-3 at Wembley and 7-1 in Budapest, by a rampant Hungarian team.

Winterbottom didn't get the secretary's job because that conniving old rascal Harold Thompson bullied the selection committee to give the job to the feeble Denis Follows, who he proceeded to bully into a heart attack.

After Follows it is hard to think of any subsequent FA secretary, by whatever title, who amounted to much.

Ted Croker came in full of good intentions. I remember lunching with him soon after his appointment when he expressed his horror at what he had discovered about the relations of Wembley Stadium with a complaisant FA. In the event he did nothing about it or a number of other relevant things.

Under fire... Martin Glenn

Graham Kelly, whom I nicknamed "Kelly the Jelly", made the surprising transition from chief executive of the Football League to top man at the FA. Kelly, of course, was a leading figure in the dubious birth of what I will always call the "Greed Is Good League", thereby ignoring the historic remit of the FA to look after football at every level. He would eventually be forced to resign after a controversial deal with the Welsh association.

Mark Palios was driven out after his affair with a femme fatale working at the FA, who alas bestowed her favours on then-England manager Sven Goran Eriksson, who somewhat surprisingly retained his job.

Rous may have been a snob and an authoritarian but at least he was a good enough referee to officiate at the 1934 FA Cup Final just before being appointed by the FA, and he himself re-wrote the laws of the game.

Jose is right to question the League Cup's value

Unloved...Manchester United's Jesse Lingard scores against Burton Albion in this season's League Cup

Jose Mourinho, forever putting the cat among the pigeons, recently declared that he thought the League Cup, which has had more names in its time than a confidence trickster, should be abolished. This though his Manchester United side won it last season.

For this he was severely taken to task by a prominent football journalist who felt the League Cup was a source of valid competition and importance.

I must say that however ambiguous Mourinho's attitude may seem, it is a valid view, but one that has again raised the ghost of that implacable xenophobe, Alan Hardaker. For the League Cup was conceived by him as essentially a potential rival to the hallowed FA Cup.

Originally a midweek, home-and-away aggregate affair, for some years it looked as if his ambitions had scant chance of success. But Hardaker, who bullied Chelsea out of competing in the first-ever European Cup, never succumbed easily. In due course he produced his masterstroke, locating the Final at Wembley. That done, he managed to contrive a deal which gave its winners an automatic place in European football – at the expense of whatever team would have finished high enough in the league to qualify.

The crowds for the first stages of the current League Cup have, with very rare exceptions, been painfully small, with only just over 20,000 bothering to turn up at Wembley for Spurs.

For all Mourinho's inconsistency, I do feel he is right. This is a cup too many, whatever its name.

Europa League is out of time

Talking of irrelevant competitions, what of the Europa League? Once upon a time we had a vibrant Cup-winners Cup, but one major club after another has joined the senior European competition and the present Thursday competition is devoid of glamour.

However, while there has been a rush by clubs to a senior competition which is now arguably over populated, there is little hope of turning back the clock.

Europa clash...Marseille (white) and Konyaspor

Bad but not England's worst

Will people ever get it right? A *Daily Telegraph* columnist has called England's defeat by Iceland the worst in their history. Worse than losing 1-0 in the 1950 World Cup to a USA team of unknowns?

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SPECIAL FEATURE

WORDS: Sid Lowe

Summer of discontent

Neymar's departure, Messi's unsigned contract, unhappy fans: the problems are mounting for Barcelona

Outside Camp Nou, long queues were forming. Inside, Barcelona were winning – but that didn't stop some *socis* lining up before the game, and after it, to sign a petition demanding a *moción de censura* (a vote of confidence) against the president Josep Maria Bartomeu. Agustin Benedito, the man proposing the *moción* admitted that it was difficult, but insisted that he was on course to collect the 16,570 signatures necessary to force it through.

The second time he set up stalls at Camp Nou, Barca also won. The season could barely have started better, with Barca winning their first six games in La Liga to establish a seven-point lead over Real Madrid – and, even at this early stage of the season, that's a hugely significant gap – and they started their Champions League campaign with a 3-0 victory over Juventus.

Yet despite all this, many fans are determined to see Bartomeu depart – although whether there are enough to actually force the vote of no confidence remains to be seen.

Writing in the sports newspaper *AS*,

FCB
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CLUB

Santi Gimenez recently said that they should hand out shovels with Barcelona membership cards, so supporters could dig themselves a trench to occupy. He had a point too, This is a club partly defined by what came to be known as the *"entorno"* – hidden and not-so-hidden interests, that swirl of pressure, power and politics that surrounds the club, an almost permanent civil war.

Some tension is inevitable, crisis almost permanently latent, and there has certainly been cause for complaint – even more so than usual. Calling it a crisis is not such an exaggeration.

Every day things seemed to be going wrong for Bartomeu. Every time he tried to make things better, they got even worse. Never mind the supporters, someone seemed to have handed him a shovel and he just kept on digging.

The day that Barcelona presented Ousame Dembele, they opened the doors to the fans at Camp Nou. Up in the stands, they waited. And waited, and waited, and waited.

It later emerged that there had been a problem with the paperwork that delayed Dembele's unveiling. As the minutes ticked by, the supporters grew more and more irritated – and they were irritated enough as it was.

Soon the chants began and they were familiar ones: "Bartomeu, *dimisión*!" (Bartomeu, resign!) It was supposed to be a happy occasion, but it ended up like this. Another day, another mess.

There have been plenty of them over a disastrous summer and the list doesn't make for pretty reading. They chased Arsenal's Hector Bellerin and didn't get him. They chased Marco Verratti from Paris Saint-Germain and didn't just not get him – they, of course, soon found

Barca only found out Neymar's intentions during a pre-season tour of the USA...the players had known since Lionel Messi's wedding

Gone...Neymar joined Paris Saint-Germain

Anticipation...fans await the arrival of Ousmane Dembele

PSG coming back for Neymar.

When the stories broke, vice-president Jordi Mestre said that he was "200 per cent sure" Neymar would stay at the club. He didn't. Instead, he left, having paid the €222million buy-out clause. In an attempt to defend and protect Barcelona, La Liga refused to accept the payment...which Barcelona themselves accepted just a few hours later.

Barcelona said they had only found out about Neymar's intentions during the club's pre-season tour of the USA. The players, on the other hand, admitted that they had known since Lionel Messi's wedding. No one had thought to tell the directors. Or if they had, they didn't want to. From the US, Gerard Pique had announced: "*Se queda*" (he's staying).

But Neymar didn't stay, although his move had been delayed long enough that when it finally went through, he was due an additional "loyalty" payment – no laughing at the back there – reputedly worth €26m. Barcelona refused to pay and a battle began.

Pressure...club president Josep Maria Bartomeu

Not long after, Neymar said Barcelona deserved better directors than the "joke" directors they had. And, here's the thing. However annoyed supporters were with him, many agreed. Bizarrely, they were actually on his side on this one. Others suggested that while he was the last person in the world allowed to say so, that didn't make him wrong.

A few days later, Barca announced they were going to take legal action against Neymar. That very afternoon, he was back in the city at a birthday party with other Barcelona players. Pictures of them, friends together, flooded social media. Messages that made reference to "*se queda*" made light of his departure, and the very public display of affection brought the division between players and board sharply into focus.

That seemed to be reflected in perhaps the worst part of all. Twice Bartomeu announced that Lionel Messi had renewed his contract with the club. But he hadn't.

He claimed that it was just a case of finding the time, the right moment, to announce it formally and take some photos. After the tour, he said. Before the season, he said. But it never happened.

Bartomeu insisted the deal was agreed, but the fact that it was not publicly signed was a concerning one. If the photo hadn't been taken, there must be a reason for it. Some feared the worst.

Even if Messi does want to stay – and most assume he does – the failure to sign it all off is telling. At the very least, he does not want to be used politically.

Maybe he wants to see what happens with the vote of no confidence first? Maybe he wants Bartomeu out? Maybe he doesn't want this president boasting that he closed this deal? Whatever he says now will be huge politically – and that may well be a political responsibility he does not want.

Whatever the outcome, there is a simple, scary bottom line: in three months Messi can negotiate with whoever he wants. At the end of the season he could walk away for free. So can Andres Iniesta. Bartomeu claimed that Iniesta had agreed to a contract renewal. Asked if he could confirm it the next day, Iniesta replied "no". In its simplicity it said much.

There was more in a summer marked by Neymar's departure and the sense of weakness and uncertainty that it created around the Catalans. This was only deepened by the nagging feeling, put bluntly, of incompetence and repeated

Injured...Ousmane Dembele is hurt against Getafe

Frustration...fans are getting angry

failure. Barcelona informed Real Sociedad of their intention to pay the buy-out clause for Inigo Martinez and then, at the last minute, pulled out.

They chased Nice's Jean Seri, having ruled him out earlier in the summer when they were still pursuing Verratti and thus missed the deadline on a clause that would have made signing him easy. But then they pulled out of that too, leaving the player publicly admitting that he was devastated, having been convinced that he was off to Camp Nou.

So last minute was the decision that *El Mundo Deportivo*, a newspaper extremely close to the president, had two different covers within half an hour: "Seri signs", then "Seri doesn't sign". Barca alleged that this was a technical decision and he just wasn't the right player. It didn't wash.

It's not normal to be on the verge of signing a player that you don't think is the right target anyway.

By then they had signed Paulinho. The poor Brazilian had not done anything wrong, but he was attacked mercilessly as if his signing symbolised everything that was wrong: a 29-year-old arriving from China at a cost of €40m.

Soon, the critics were changing their mind on that one, at least, after he scored two games running, but with the €222m from Neymar burning a hole in their pocket, prices everywhere were heading skywards and Barcelona never seemed to be fully in control of the market, even if, after he effectively went on strike, they finally got Dembele from Borussia Dortmund – for an initial €105m. As if to sum it all up, he then suffered a tendon injury in just his third game for the club which will keep him out for at least three months.

> With the €222m burning a hole in their pocket, prices were heading skywards and Barca never seemed fully in control of the market

So there's no Dembele and there's no Philippe Coutinho either, of course.

All summer Liverpool insisted that they would not sell the Brazilian, no matter what, but Barcelona kept briefing that they would try. On the final day, with countless other names suddenly appearing on the scene – they tried, and failed, to get Angel Di Maria from PSG – they made one last try. Predictably, they failed.

The next day Barcelona held a press conference to explain their activities over the summer. At one point the sporting director accidentally referred to "Leo's departure" instead of Neymar's.

A Freudian slip over Messi perhaps, but one that didn't go unnoticed. WS

Next move...Lionel Messi is out of contract at Barcelona next year

The ones that got away...(right, from top) Hector Bellerin, Philippe Coutinho, Angel Di Maria, Inigo Martinez, Jean Seri and Marco Verratti

Europe's top spenders *Summer 2017*

BARCELONA

IN		OUT	
OUSMANE DEMBELE (Borussia Dortmund)	€105m	NEYMAR (Paris Saint-Germain)	€222m
PAULINHO (Guangzhou E'grande)	€40m	CRISTIAN TELLO (Betis)	€4m
NELSON SEMEDO (Benfica)	€30.5m	**Total:**	€226m
GERARD DEULOFEU (Everton)	€12m		
MARLON (Fluminense)	€5m		
Total:	€192.5m		

NET SPEND

Minus €33.5m

TOP SPENDERS (Gross)

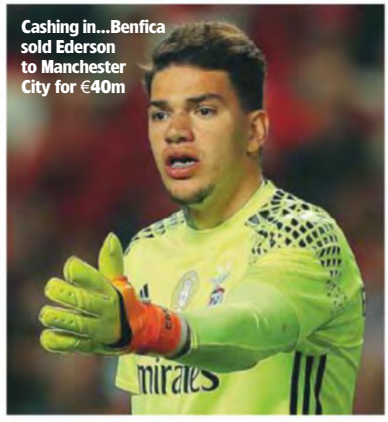
1	MANCHESTER CITY	€244.3m
2	PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN	€238m
3	CHELSEA	€199.9m
4	MILAN	€194.5m
5	BARCELONA	€192.5m
6	MANCHESTER UNITED	€164.4m
7	EVERTON	€158.2m
8	JUVENTUS	€149.2m
9	BAYERN MUNICH	€103.5m
10	MONACO	€102m
11	ATLETICO MADRID	€98m
12	TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR	€93.1m
13	ROMA	€92.95m
14	LIVERPOOL	€89m
15	ZENIT	€85m
16	LEICESTER CITY	€83.35m
17	BORUSSIA DORTMUND	€82.73m
18	INTERNAZIONALE	€80.58m
19	FIORENTINA	€69.9m
20	LILLE	€65m
21	MARSEILLE	€62m
22	WATFORD	€61.5m
23	RB LEIPZIG	€60.5m
24	WOLFSBURG	€59.5m
25	SEVILLA	€57.85m

TOP SPENDERS (Net)

1	PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN	€173m
2	MILAN	€162.5m
3	MANCHESTER UNITED	€152.9m
4	MANCHESTER CITY	€147.95m
5	ZENIT	€71.4m
6	BAYERN MUNICH	€70.95m
7	MARSEILLE	€59.25m
8	EVERTON	€50.82m
9	NAPOLI	€49m
10	BRIGHTON & HOVE ALBION	€47.6m
11	WATFORD	€46m
12	LILLE	€44.9m
13	WEST BROMWICH ALBION	€43.65m
14	LIVERPOOL	€41.8m
15	SCHALKE	€40.45m
16	HUDDERSFIELD TOWN	€38.7m
17	RB LEIPZIG	€37.1m
18	LEICESTER CITY	€35.45m
19	BOURNEMOUTH	€34.3m
20	CRYSTAL PALACE	€34.2m
21	ATLETICO MADRID	€29m
22	SOUTHAMPTON	€25.7m
23	JUVENTUS	€25.3m
24	WOLFSBURG	€23.5m
25	NEWCASTLE UNITED	€22.9m

TOP REVENUE (Net)

1	BENFICA	€122m
2	BORUSSIA DORTMUND	€83.77m
3	REAL MADRID	€77.5m
4	MONACO	€75.5m
5	LYON	€69.05m
6	AJAX	€63.45m
7	TORINO	€54m
8	PORTO	€48.9m
9	LAZIO	€42.55m
10	BAYER LEVERKUSEN	€40.8m
11	BARCELONA	€33.5m
12	SAO PAULO	€30.77m
13	HULL CITY	€29.42m
14	RIVER PLATE	€27.53m
15	SWANSEA CITY	€27.5m
16	MALAGA	€23.6m
17	ROMA	€22.3m
18	ANDERLECHT	€21.1m
19	SPORTING	€20.45m
20	SEVILLA	€18.15m



Cashing in...Benfica sold Ederson to Manchester City for €40m

eye witness

Steve Menary reports

LIECHTENSTEIN

One club, two countries: life as European underdogs

Mixed feelings as Vaduz drop to Swiss second tier

After a three-year stay in the Swiss Super League, Vaduz were relegated to the second-tier Challenge League – and the absence of the Liechtensteiner club this season is not being mourned.

The presence of a foreign team in their top flight, while big-name local sides such as Zurich, Servette and Neuchatel Xamax have laboured in the division below irked some in Switzerland.

"We have quite a good relationship with clubs like Basle, FC Zurich and Sion, but quite a lot of clubs, especially in the west, do not like Vaduz and would rather have another French-speaking club in the Super League," claims Hans Thony, a former Vaduz director who is now head of one of their three fan clubs.

Zurich went up at the end of last term and replaced Vaduz, whose demotion was at least eased by yet another stint in the Europa League after beating USV Eschen/Mauren in the Liechtenstein Cup Final.

A decision by the Liechtensteiner Fussballverband (LFV) to alternate the Final between the national stadium in Vaduz and the only other UEFA-rated ground in Eschen failed to help the hosts as Vaduz romped home in front of less than 1,000 fans in an atmosphere that felt more village fete than UEFA qualification. Cow bells chimed and the aroma of silage from the nearby fields smothered the smell of sizzling bratwurst and beer.

The LFV's new youth coach, Mario Frick, did not help the attendance by holding a coaching session at the same time. And the scheduling of that session says a great deal about both the role of Vaduz and also the Liechtenstein Cup.

Football in Liechtenstein began in 1932 with the formation of three clubs: Balzers, Triesen and Vaduz. The LFV was formed two years later and in 1945-46 a cup competition was staged, with Triesen beating Vaduz in the Final.

> "Quite a lot of clubs do not like Vaduz and would rather have another French-speaking club in the Super League"
>
> **Hans Thony, a former Vaduz director**

Today, Liechtenstein still only has seven clubs and a national league is not viable, so the cup competition is the only route into Europe and some UEFA prize money.

Vaduz are the country's only full-time club and, unsurprisingly, have won 19 of the last 20 Finals. USV broke that run in 2012, with a famous win on penalties, but the current USV team is a shadow of that side. After Vaduz trounced Triesen 18-0 in this year's semi-finals, few anticipated another Final shock. And after USV went behind after a minute, Vaduz won 5-1.

With national-team stalwarts Peter Jehle and Franz Burgmeier missing the Final through injury, highly rated defender Max Goppel was the only player from Liechtenstein to start the game for Vaduz.

In the second-half of last season's Swiss Super League, Lausanne-Sport fielded club-trained players for 30.8 per cent of the squad's total playing time. Vaduz had the lowest figure at just 3.3 per cent.

"We have the most players from within Switzerland," argues Thony. "Players who

Cup Final...Vaduz (in red) take on USV Eschen/Mauren

Going down...Vaduz defender Simone Grippo (centre) fails to stop Gabriel Torres scoring for Lausanne-Sport last season

cannot get into the first XI at St Gallen or Basle, we are picking up these players."

However, that is not helping the connection between Liechtensteiners and their most successful club.

Backed by local conglomerate MBPI, Vaduz reached the Super League for the first time in 2008 but the locals did not respond and crowds averaged 2,200 as the team finished bottom of the table.

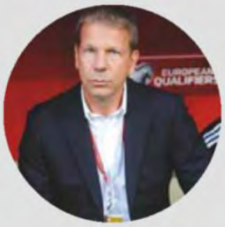
The appointment of Swiss coach Giorgio Contini in 2012 proved a turning point and Vaduz returned to the Super League in 2014, with Contini managing to keep them up for two seasons despite a budget of around SFr5.5million that was easily the smallest in the league.

Liechtenstein has a total population of 35,000 – of which 5,000 are in

Atmosphere...a USV fan at the Final

Rheinpark Stadion...the national team's home

KEY PEOPLE



RENE PAURITSCH ▲
Former Grazer AK player took charge of the national team in 2013.

HUGO QUADERER
Elected LFV president in 2015 and previously a member of Liechtenstein's government. Still works full-time, as a fund manager.

ROLAND VRABEC ▲
Landed the Vaduz job two weeks after being sacked by FSV Frankfurt but could not prevent relegation. Has carried out a massive overhaul of his playing staff this summer.

MARIO FRICK
Liechtenstein's greatest player scored 16 goals in 125 internationals and played in the Swiss Super League for Basle and Zurich, then in Serie A for Verona. He returned to Liechtenstein in 2011 to join boyhood club Balzers and after retiring he took over as coach before joining the LFV youth set-up in the summer of 2017.

FRANZ BURGMEIER ▲
Along with veteran keeper Peter Jehle, he is the backbone of the national team. A winger with Vaduz, where his brother Patrick is chief executive.

Vaduz – but the club's hegemony makes the club unpopular outside the capital.

USV Eschen/Mauren vice-president Markus Kaiser says: "Sometimes it's hard to be a USV fan and back Vaduz, but we appreciate what they are doing. Sometimes a player can move up from USV to Vaduz and that is good."

Hans Thony is more direct and argues: "Support from other clubs is very small, almost non-existent. Someone from Balzers would rather not go to a football match than watch Vaduz."

Gates at Vaduz improved last season to an average of 3,800 as the club found support across the border in St Gallen and Grisons, with Swiss fans taking up the cause of the unlikely interlopers.

Vaduz's role as the underdog was cemented by a deal struck by the LFV and their Swiss counterparts before the club's first promotion that means Vaduz must pay SFr1m to play in the Super League even though they can never win it.

"Vaduz can never be Swiss champions even if we have the most points," says Thony. "If we finish top on 70 points and Basle finished second on 68 points, the table would show us top but Basle would go into the Champions League."

LFV president Hugo Quaderer defends the deal and the dominance of Vaduz, explaining: "I think it's best for Vaduz and best for Liechtenstein football.

"It's important that we have a professional club structure in place for young players from Liechtenstein."

European competiton is only available via the country's domestic cup, and last season Vaduz made the third qualifying round of the Europa League, only to stumble against Swiss league rivals Thun.

This season they beat Welsh side Bala Town in the first round but were then knocked out 2-0 on aggregate by Norwegian side Odd.

The Swiss second-tier Challenge League is professional but wages are low, and after relegation a swathe of experienced players left Vaduz.

Albanian striker Albion Avdijaj joined

International...Marcel Buchel of Verona

Thrashing...Spain's Iago Aspas turns away after scoring in an 8-0 victory over Liechtenstein

Grasshoppers, while Swiss international Moreno Costanzo went to Thun and his midfield partner Simone Grippo signed for Spain's Real Zaragoza. Experienced Liechtenstein international Nicolas Hasler moved to Toronto.

Vaduz coach Roland Vrabec brought in a dozen new players, including Senegalese forward Mohamed Coulibaly from Logrones, Ukrainian international Marko Devic from Rostov and German midfielder Nicolas Jullich from Sonnenhof, as well as Liechtenstein under-21 keeper Armando Majer from German side Mannschaft.

The country's second-biggest club are Balzers, who play in the Swiss fourth-tier Liga Classic along with USV.

"For players at a club like Balzers, they will train three or four times a week and also be working from nine to five," says Daniel Brandle, a national team midfielder who played for St Andrews in Malta last season. "They use their annual holidays to play for the national team.

"That's no good if you have a girlfriend or a family. The work ethic is so high here that it's difficult to find a flexible employer. That's why so many players focus on their jobs when they get to 25. It's one of our biggest problems."

After leaving St Andrews this summer, Brandle headed to Manchester in search of a club in the higher echelons of the English non-league pyramid and a few of his fellow countrymen have trod a similar path overseas. Yanick Frick, a teenage striker who is son of Mario Frick, is currently in the reserves at Austrian top-flight side Altach, while midfielder Sandro Wieser is on loan at Roeselare in Belgium from Reading.

Like many national coaches of smaller countries, Rene Pauritsch has to contend with a lack of game-time for players who go looking for a contract overseas, so to bolster his squad the Austrian looked abroad and unearthed Austria-born midfielder Marcel Buchel, who is with Verona in Italy and Cengiz Bicer, who plays for Kastamonuspor in Turkey.

Pauritsch kept Liechtenstein off the bottom of their Euro 2016 qualifying group by taking four points from Moldova but his side fared less well in the 2018 World Cup qualifiers, being thrashed 8-0 both home and away by Spain.

With veterans Martin Stocklasa retiring in 2014 after winning 113 caps and Mario Frick hanging up his boots the following year, Pauritsch has had a difficult task on the international stage. But at least the continuing domestic cup route into Europe will give some local players an early taste of continental competition. WS

Rheinpark Stadion... ahead of the World Cup qualifier against Spain in September

The Magnificent Seven: Liechtenstein's clubs

BALZERS
Cup winners 11 times, they played in the Cup-winners Cup twice, winning a round in 1993-94. Their last national cup success was in 1997 and they currently play in Liga Classic, Switzerland's fourth tier.

USV ESCHEN/MAUREN
Founded in 1963, they have won the cup five times and interrupted Vaduz's run of success in 2012 but lost both subsequent Europa League qualifiers. They also play in Liga Classic.

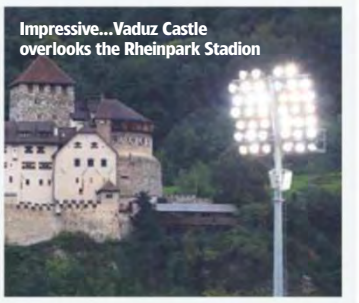
RUGGELL
Cup finalists six times, the last time in 2007, they play in Liga 3, the sixth tier of the Swiss system. Coached by former national team stalwart Ronny Buchel.

SCHAAN
From Liechtenstein's second most populous town, they play in the Swiss fifth tier, Liga 2. Three times cup winners but not since 1994 – after which they made their solitary European appearance, losing to Bulgaria's Pirin Blagoevgrad in the Cup-winners Cup first round.

TRIESEN
Also play in Liga 3, they are eight times cup winners but not since 1975.

TRIESENBERG
Liechtenstein's newest club, from the mountain town of Triesenberg, they were founded in 1972 and were promoted to Liga 2 in 2010. Their only cup Final appearance was in 2015. Their picturesque hillside ground was redeveloped in 2017.

VADUZ
Liechtenstein's only full-time club have appeared in all but one cup Final since 1983-84 and have lost only one in the last 19 years.



Impressive...Vaduz Castle overlooks the Rheinpark Stadion

6 of the best

Deadline-day signings

Nick Bidwell looks at some of the summer's more impressive late transfer deals

1 Serge AURIER

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

Spurs' £23million acquisition from Paris Saint-Germain has all the attributes of a world-class right-back: powerful, quick, technically assured and relentless when going forward. When PSG won the domestic treble in 2016 he was outstanding, a compelling blend of the electrifying and the muscular. Unfortunately, the 24-year-old Ivorian also has something of a bad-boy reputation, receiving a suspended sentence for assaulting a police officer and earning himself a torrent of criticism for appearing to use homophobic language to insult then PSG coach Laurent Blanc. He's not all bad though – during a World Cup qualifier against Mali he helped save the life of opposition midfielder Moussa Doumbia by making sure the latter did not swallow his tongue after being knocked unconscious.

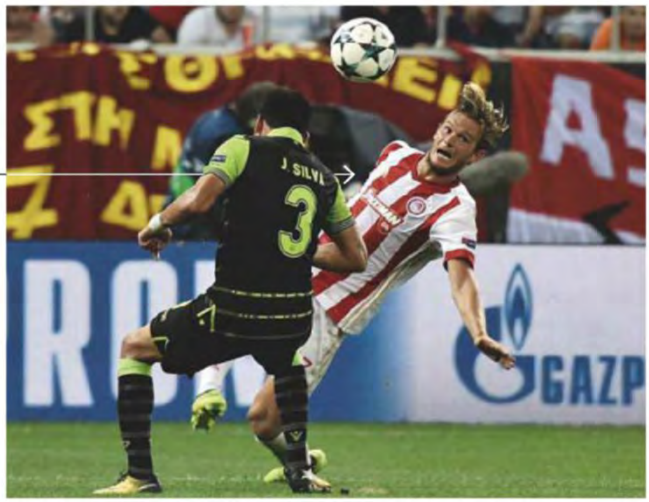
2 Pedro ROCHA

SPARTAK MOSCOW

Reigning Russian champions Spartak will be heavily reliant on wing play this term, with the flying Dutchman Quincy Promes on the right and their €12million Brazilian purchase from Gremio on the opposite flank. Russian football insiders have suggested that the Gremio player Spartak really wanted was striker Luan, and that the 23-year-old winger was only snapped up in a consolation prize. What is undeniable, however, is his lightening pace and trickery, with some seeing glimpses of Robinho in his style. He still has a few faults to iron out, not least his tendency to snatch at chances and to stray offside. This year he saved his best Gremio performances for the Libertadores Cup and was particularly impressive when scoring twice in a round-of-16 victory over Argentinian side Godoy Cruz.

3 Bjorn ENGELS

OLYMPIAKOS



Those in the know in Belgium were more than a little surprised when they heard the news that Club Brugge's accomplished centre-back had signed for Olympiakos. The 23-year-old has never made a secret of his fascination for the Premier League and, with Stoke City and Leicester City apparently keen, England was his expected destination. Instead, he signed a four-season deal with the Greek club and the opportunity to face Barcelona, Juventus and Sporting in the Champions League. "In the end I had to put myself first," he explained. "[In England] I would have been battling for a place with experienced defenders. At best, I might only have been the fourth choice." A first-teamer with Club Brugge since the age of 18, he was a key figure in their Belgian title success last year.

4 NANI

LAZIO

After selling Senegalese winger Keita Balde to Monaco, Lazio repaired the front-line damage by sealing a one-year loan deal – with an option to buy – with Valencia for their experienced Portuguese international. Director of sport Igli Tare described the arrival of the ex-Manchester United star as the "cherry on the cake" of the transfer window and he has every reason to be delighted. Whether as a second striker or operating out wide, the 30-year-old's alliance with the prolific Ciro Immobile could make sparks fly. Having once driven coaches to distraction with his inconsistency, he now brings more intensity and desire to the table – and as he proved in Portugal's triumph at Euro 2016, he has now become a genuine leader.

5 Roberto INGLESE

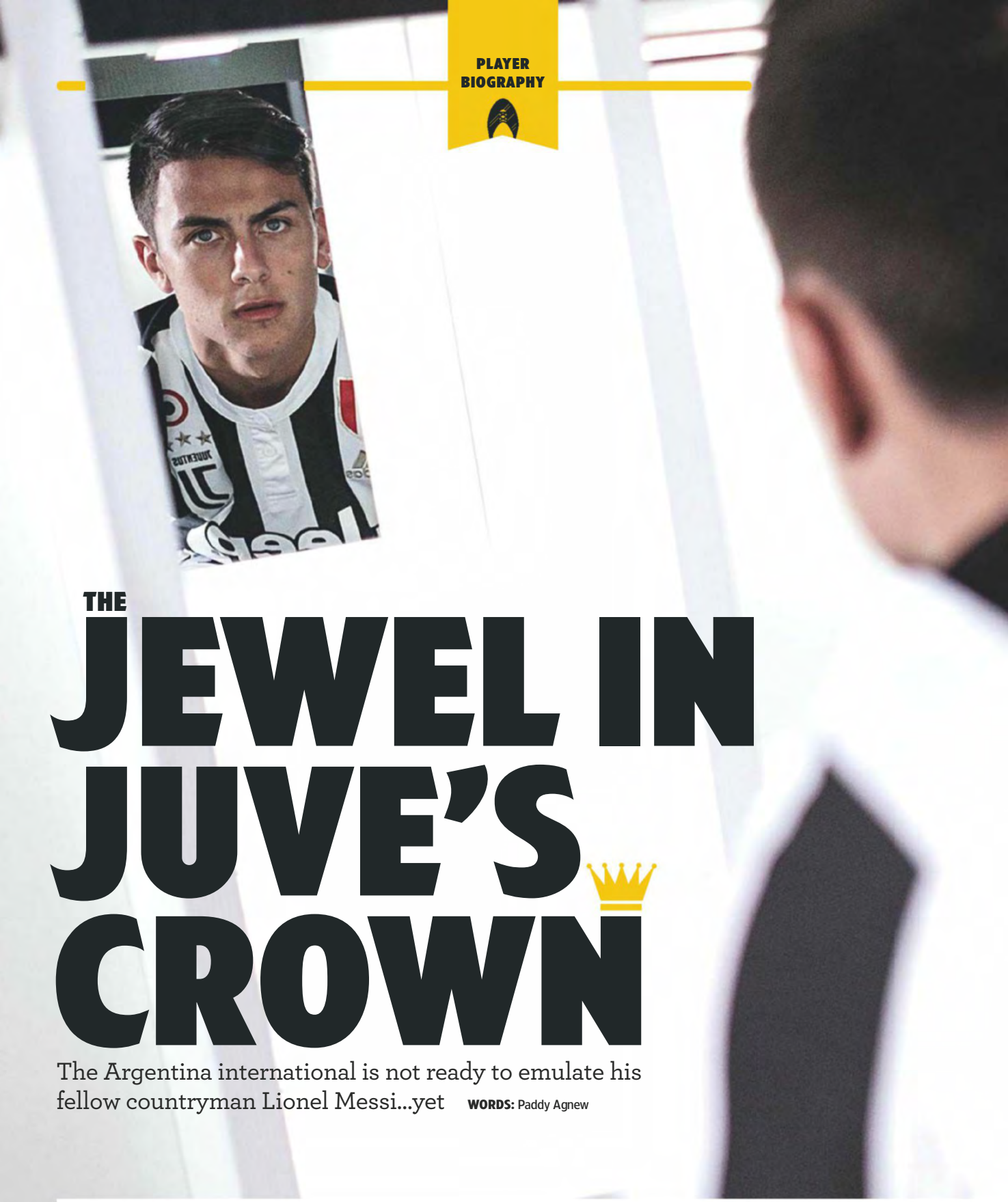
CHIEVO

During the summer sales, the 25-year-old Chievo centre-forward signed for Serie A powerhouse Napoli in a €12million deal before being told he was to go straight back on loan to the *Gialloblu*. And Chievo can only be overjoyed that he is still with them as last season's 10 goals and four assists represented almost a third of their total attacking output – without which, relegation would probably have beckoned. An old-school marksman who is not especially in his element outside the box, he was previously with lower-league sides Pescara, had loan spells at Lumezzane and Carpi, and has been called up three times this year to Italian developmental squads. Nicknamed "Bobby English" by Chievo fans.

6 Kevin KAMPL

RB LEIPZIG

Determined to quit Bayer Leverkusen this summer, the Slovenian midfielder had job offers from teams in Spain, Italy and China. But the 26-year-old finally put pen to paper on a €20million move when last term's Bundesliga runners-up came in with the offer of Champions League football, possible German silverware and a spot in a full-throttle ensemble that is made-to-measure for him. So keen was he to head to Saxony, he even took a pay cut. With Naby Keita due to join Liverpool next season, RB's plan is for KK to eventually succeed the Guinean in the central box-to-box role. Meanwhile, he is no stranger to Red Bull sports, having played for the company's Austrian franchise in Salzburg.



THE JEWEL IN JUVE'S CROWN

The Argentina international is not ready to emulate his fellow countryman Lionel Messi...yet **WORDS:** Paddy Agnew

The day after he missed the decisive penalty in the Italian Super Cup in December, Juventus striker Paulo Dybala posted the following statement on his Instagram account.

"I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions I have been entrusted to take the game-winning shot ...and I missed.

"I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that's precisely why I succeed."

The words are those of basketball star Michael Jordan, but there are two things that immediately come to mind. Either Dybala is absurdly wise at just 23 or he has a very good PR team.

Those who know Dybala would suggest a bit of both. He is indeed wise beyond his years, while he is fiercely protected and carefully managed by his Argentinian family clan. His mother, Alicia, lives two floors below him in a central Turin condominium and, as of September, his financial affairs are being looked after ▸

Timeline

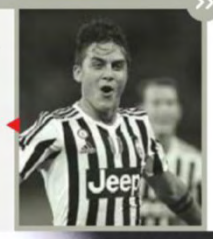
JUL 20, 2012
Joins Palermo from Instituto on a four-year deal.

NOV 11, 2012
Scores his first goals in Italian football as Palermo win 2-0 at home to Sampdoria.

MAY 3, 2014
Part of the Palermo side that gains promotion with a 1-0 victory over Novara and then goes on to win the Serie B title.

JUN 4, 2015
Signs a five-year deal with Juventus and is handed the number 21 shirt, which was previously worn by Andrea Pirlo who left in the summer.

AUG 8, 2015
Appears as a 61st minute substitute against Lazio in the Italian Super Cup and scores the second goal in a 2-0 victory.



by his brother, Gustavo.

The point about Dybala is that many see him as the latest in a long line of foreign stars in Italian football, with the former Instituto de Cordoba player following in the footsteps of such great names as Diego Maradona, Michel Platini, Zbigniew Boniek, Zico, Ronaldo and Gabriel Batistuta.

As Dybala prepared for his third season with champions Juventus, the Italian media's sense of expectation about him and his likely impact on both domestic and European football became just a trifle overstated. For a start, when Juve opened their Champions League campaign in Barcelona this September, many commentators opted for an almost heretical comparison between Dybala and his illustrious compatriot Lionel Messi.

On the night, that rash comparison melted like butter in the Cordoba midday sun as Messi served up yet another example of just why many believe he is the finest footballer of the modern age. Dybala is a wonderfully talented player, but he is not yet Messi, nor could anyone reasonably expect him to be.

What is true, however, is that by the time Messi is ready to hang up his boots, the player that Argentinians call "*La Joya*" (the jewel) could be ready to more than adequately fill those famous boots.

On the morning after Barca's 3-0 defeat of Juventus, Italian football yet again scratched its collective head as it attempted to absorb its third consecutive drubbing by Spanish football in the last five months. Real Madrid's 4-1 defeat of Juventus in the Champions League Final in May and Spain's 3-0 thrashing of the national team in a World Cup qualifier in early September were the antipasti to this most recent debacle.

Inevitably, critics and fans alike pointed a disappointed finger at Dybala, arguing that he had failed to deliver.

Within hours, however, his club captain, Gigi Buffon, had jumped to his defence, telling Media Premium TV: "Last season I would have said that Dybala was one of the five best players in the world; indeed, at times he was in the top three.

"And I still think that, even if he did so-so in one single game, you have got to remember that, against Barcelona, it was the entire Juventus team that did not play well and that made it very difficult for Dybala.

"I would say that, given the consistent quality of his game in the last 18 months, he is worthy of all the fuss and attention. You know, I have played with and against a lot of great players and that's why I can tell you that Paulo is a member of an elite club of class players."

Comparisons...with compatriot Lionel Messi

> "Last season I would have said that Dybala was one of the five best players in the world; indeed, at times he was in the top three"
> Gigi Buffon

Buffon is not the only 2006 World Cup-winner to have praised Dybala. Back in 2013, Rino Gattuso had a brief, three-month sojourn as coach of Serie B side Palermo.

Gattuso might not have lasted long enough to make much of an impact on the Palermo season, but he was there long enough to make the following observation about a 20-year-old who had arrived in Italian football with Palermo the previous summer: "He's a player who is two pages ahead of all the others in the football manual.

"He is pure class, there is no way that he will not become a great player. Just look at his technique and the football he can play. He is the real thing, the guy with the numbers."

If Dybala disappointed fans and critics alike in that 3-0 drubbing by Barcelona, he has, to some extent, only himself to blame.

When the two teams met in the first leg of last season's Champions League quarter-final in Turin, Dybala had one of his best games of the season for Juve, scoring twice in an emphatic 3-0 victory – a result which did much to propel his side down the road and into the Final.

His performance that night prompted more unfortunate comparisons with Messi, with some suggesting that the "King" had just been forced to abdicate his Argentinian "throne" in favour of the "Young Pretender".

Such conclusions were clearly premature, but it was not for nothing that Juventus agreed a new €7million-a-year contract through to 2022 with Dybala just days after that result.

Dybala had set the bar very high for himself. When it came to the Cardiff Final, and again at Camp Nou this autumn, he was not able to live up to expectations. There is, however, plenty of time for both Dybala and Juventus to recover ground in the Champions League this season. For the Argentinian, that is important because the Cardiff defeat hurt.

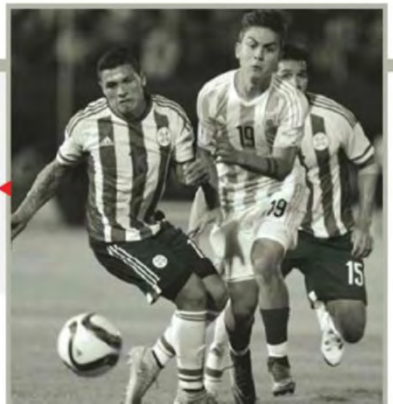
Speaking to *The New York Times* on the eve of season, Dybala confirmed this when saying: "In football, you always have the chance for *revancha* (revenge). There is a phrase in Argentina: it is an *espina clavada*, a thorn in your side, something that hurts you.

"The pain of losing that Final will be with me until I lift that trophy. I will be

On the up... celebrated by his Palermo team-mates

AUG 30, 2015
Gets his first goal for Juve in Serie A in a 2–1 defeat by Roma.

OCT 13, 2015
Comes off the bench to replace Carlos Tevez and make his international debut as Argentina draw 0-0 with Paraguay in a World Cup qualifier.



FEB 23, 2016
Scores in the Champions League for the first time, in a 2–2 draw at home to Bayern Munich in the round of 16.

MAY 14, 2016
On target twice as Juventus thrash Sampdoria 5-0 at the end of a season in which he collects his first Serie A title.

MAY 21, 2016
Helps Juve complete the double with a 1-0 win over Milan in the Italian Cup Final.

a lot calmer then."

You could argue that for both Dybala and a domestically all-dominant Juve, who have won the last six successive Serie A titles, the Champions League remains the only Alpine peak worth climbing. It may have begun badly but the climb still has a long way to go.

Likewise, the fact that Dybala's international partnership with Messi has yet to kick-start into life does not mean that the two together will not gel and deliver match-winning performances in the future.

In the meantime, Juventus are doing their best to hold on to Dybala. This summer they consigned the coveted number 10 shirt to him. The fact that this shirt has been worn in the past by such as Omar Sivori, Platini, Roberto Baggio and Alex Del Piero is no lightweight consideration in the collective Juventus mind.

New shirt...wearing the Juventus number 10 shirt this season

Juve did this against the background of consistent speculation – not just from the media but also from the powerful agent Mino Raiola – that, sooner or later, Dybala will leave Italy, with rumours of interest from first Barcelona and then Real Madrid.

On the field, the Argentinian's class is there for all to see. Very much someone who likes to play behind a powerful front man such as compatriot Gonzalo Higuain or Croat marksman Mario Mandzukic, his game is based on a mix of mobility and razor-sharp technique which sees him both create and score goals.

A left-footed player, he likes nothing better than to drift in from the right flank, putting himself into the perfect position to shoot. If his partnership with Messi has yet to explode into life, the all-

Big time...with Real Madrid's Luka Modric

SEP 1, 2016

Making his first international start, he is sent off in a World Cup qualifier against Uruguay after a second bookable offence.

APR 11, 2017

On target twice as Juventus beat Barcelona 3-0 in the Champions League.

MAY 17, 2017

Part of the side that beats Lazio 2-0 as Juventus become the first team to win three consecutive Italian Cups.

Tough...in action against Fiorentina

Argentinian entente with Higuain has long since established itself in Serie A.

Off the field, Dybala has thus far been the model professional. He generates none of the unsavoury gossip that has tripped other stars of his age: no pictures at nightclubs, no incidents with fans, no car crashes, no tantrums.

When he first arrived at Juventus his initial impact with the team saw him somewhat underused, but he told one reporter: "Eighteen months ago I was playing in Serie B with Palermo, so it is normal enough that I do not immediately command a team place"

> "He's a player who is two pages ahead of all the others in the football manual. He is pure class"
>
> Rino Gattuso

Deadly duo...with Argentina and Juventus partner Gonzalo Higuain (left)

But while Dybala almost looks too soft to be a hard-edged, top-class, aggressive athlete, his life has had its own dark sorrows, namely the death of his father, Adolfo, who died of pancreatic cancer when his son was 15 years old.

"I still cry for my dad," he has admitted. "Sometimes I dream of him at night and I wake up with tears in my eyes. But now, I think that he is looking down on me and he is happy for me."

Perhaps Adolfo would approve too of his now trademark goal celebration which sees him put his hand over his mouth with his fingers and thumb stretched across his face to create the effect of a warrior's mask. As for the meaning of his mask, a gesture that inevitably went viral when he first used it, Dybala explains: "Every day all of us have to confront problems and disappointments, but we have to fight them like a warrior, even if behind the mask we are smiling."

Five days after that Champions League loss to Barca, Dybala's eyes were smiling as he delivered his own response with a hat-trick in a 3-1 win over Sassuolo on the following Sunday.

With 10 goals in his first six Serie A games this term, the Dybala bandwagon is clearly rolling. This is most definitely a story that will run and run. WS

MAY 21, 2017
Gets Juve's second goal in a 3-0 win over Crotone that secures the club a record-breaking sixth consecutive Serie A title.

JUN 3, 2017
Plays in the Champions League Final but is on the losing side as Real Madrid beat Juventus 4-1.

AUG 13, 2017
Despite his two goals in the Italian Super Cup, Juventus lose 3-2 to Lazio.

SEP 17, 2017
Scores all three goals as Juve win 3-1 at Sassuolo – his second Serie A hat-trick of the season.

Paulo Dybala

the numbers game

TRANSFER FEES

€8.64m

Instituto to **Palermo** (2012)

€32m

Palermo to **Juventus** (2015)

ARGENTINA

10

CAPS

GOALS

0

CRYING SHAME

Just like Lionel Messi, Dybala was sent off on his first start for Argentina and left the pitch in tears.

2016-17 UEFA PLAYER OF THE YEAR

1. Cristiano Ronaldo
2. Lionel Messi
3. Gianluigi Buffon
4. Luka Modric
5. Toni Kroos
6. Paulo Dybala

HONOURS

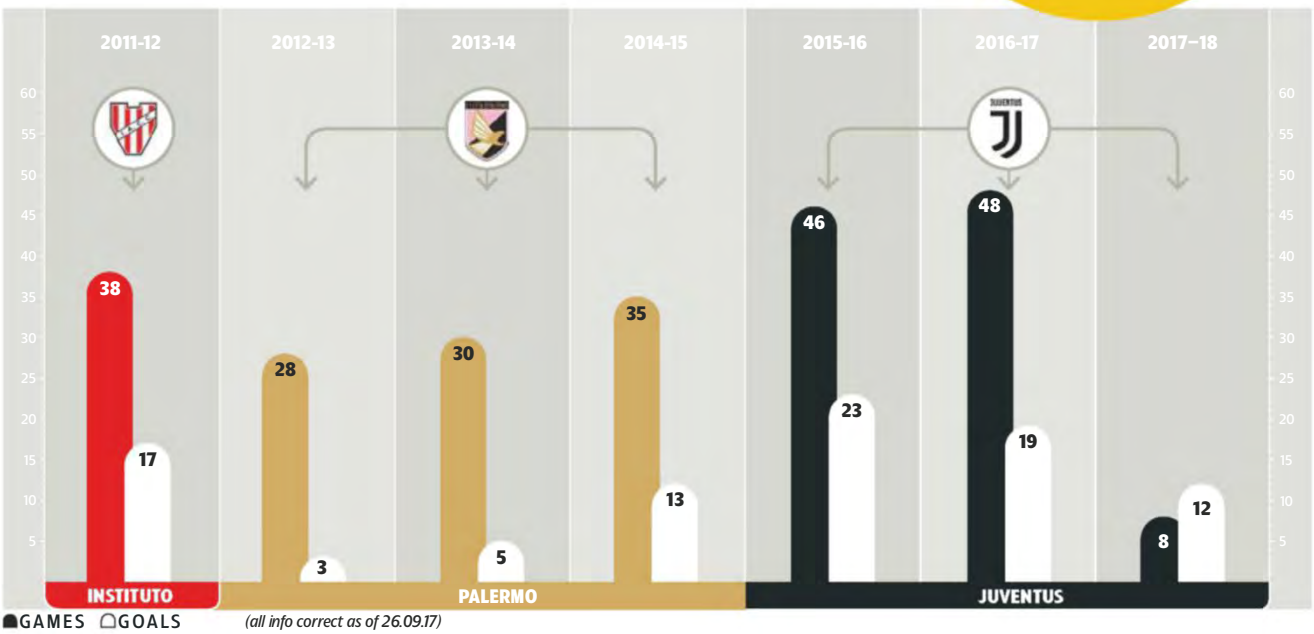
Serie B	2014			
Serie A			2016	2017
Italian Cup			2016	2017
Italian Super Cup		2015	2016	

MULTI-NATIONAL

Dybala could have played for Poland (through his grandfather), Argentina (where he was born) or Italy (who granted him citizenship in August 2012).

SKILLS

Dybala's former team-mate Paul Pogba used to call him "Square R2". According to the Manchester United midfielder: "That's the combination you press on PlayStation to do a turn and shot. He always scores like that."



(all info correct as of 26.09.17)

TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

Talentscout

SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLDS

WORDS: Nick Bidwell

Vincent THILL

Born 04.02.00, Metz (Fra) & Luxembourg

In a sentence
Precocious, slender number 10 or second striker whose reputation goes far beyond his homeland.

What they say
Metz academy director Denis Schaeffer: "We first came across him when he was just 12, and even at that age he had the rare gift of being able to use his individual skills in a collective context. He saw things on the pitch before anyone else and was always decisive."

Luxembourg coach Luc Holtz: "Our team has to be built around this kid."

Former Luxembourg striker Robby Langers: "With this lad on board, the Luxembourg team can move on to another dimension. In a few years, he will be at a top continental club."

The story so far
His mother and father both played football for Luxembourg, and he soon caught the eye, joining Metz – which is a 45-minute car drive from southern Luxembourg – at the age of 12.

Despite early interest from Bayern Munich, he sensibly decided to stay loyal to the French club and in September 2016, seven months after his 16th birthday, he made his debut as a late substitute at Bordeaux. He was already a full international at that point, having won his first cap for Luxembourg's senior side against Bosnia in March 2016.

His country's youngest international at 16 years and 50 days, he also became their youngest goalscorer, in a 3-1 friendly defeat by Nigeria in June 2016.

He starred as Luxembourg held France to a goalless draw in World Cup qualifying.

> "Our team has to be built around this kid"
> Luxembourg coach Luc Holtz

3 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THILL

- On making his professional debut, he became the first player born this millennium to appear in one of Europe's top five leagues.
- He has a "45" tattoo in honour of the Italian striker Mario Balotelli, who is one of his favourite players.
- His elder brother Sebastien is also a full Luxembourg international.

The next step
Much will depend on how often he plays as Metz coach Philippe Hinschberger tends to use him in small doses. Should the teen run out of patience there will be plenty of suitors, although he still has two years left on his current contract.

Strengths
Possesses a left foot of surgical precision, is extremely comfortable in possession and has an extraordinary ability to organise. Plays with great vision, intelligence and unshakeable self-confidence. Able to deliver a killer pass and is a danger from direct free-kicks.

Weaknesses
Needs more physical beef and athleticism. Can also be hot-headed on occasion, reacting with fury after being substituted against Holland in June.

Jadon SANCHO

Born 25.03.00, Borussia Dortmund (Ger) & England
Moved to Germany on transfer-deadline day after feeling first-team opportunities would be scarce at Manchester City. Born in South London, he played for Watford before joining City at the age of 15.

Abel RUIZ

Born 28.01.00, Barcelona B & Spain
Captained Spain's under-17s to the European title this summer and is the youngest player in Barca's B squad. From Valencia province, he went to Barca's famous La Masia academy at the age of 12.

Joao FELIX

Born 10.11.99, Benfica B & Portugal
With Benfica since 2015, he earlier spent seven years on the books of arch-rivals Porto, but they were reportedly of the opinion that he lacked endurance and steel.

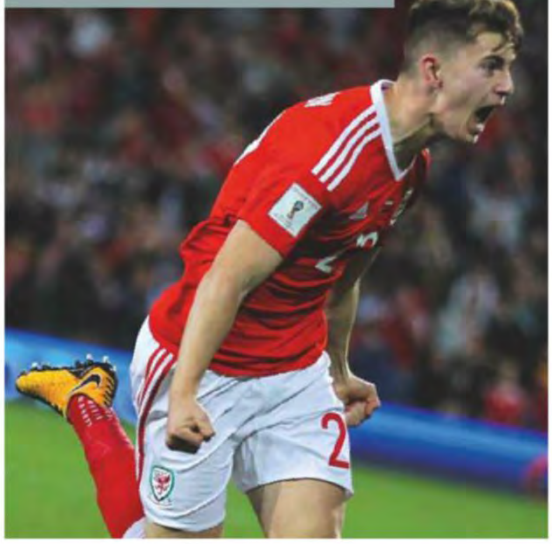
Andrew CARLETON

Born 22.06.00, Atlanta United & USA
Diminutive winger who has captained USA's under-17 side. Made his MLS debut in May, instantly winning over Atlanta fans with his flair, risk-taking and will-to-win.

Kik PIERIE

Born 20.07.00, Heerenveen & Holland
A ball-playing centre-back whose stock in trade is his thoughtful distribution, shrewd positional sense and timely interventions. Brought up in Leeuwarden but born in Boston, Massachusetts, where his father was on secondment at Harvard University.

Ben WOODBURN



Born 15.10.99, Liverpool (Eng) & Wales
Born and raised in England but eligible for Wales through his maternal grandfather, the attacking super-sub scored the winning goal in a recent World Cup qualifier against Austria in Cardiff and then providing an incisive assist for the opener in a 2-0 victory in Moldova. He first joined Liverpool's academy at the age of seven.

Amine GOUIRI

Born 16.02.00, Lyon & France
Recently turned professional, he was only 16 when initially inducted into Lyon's first-team squad last year. Top scorer at the recent European Under-17 finals, with eight goals in four games, he is powerful, strong in the air and will shoot from almost any position.

EVONIK
BVB
REWE

YOUTH ON THEIR SIDE

WORDS: Nick Bidwell

Major transfers threatened to derail their summer, but Borussia Dortmund have emerged in great shape

This summer, the Borussia Dortmund corridors of power were no place for the faint-hearted, the semi-detached or the amateurish.

From the moment the *Schwarz-Gelben* lifted the German Cup in late May until the end of the transfer window on August 31, CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke and director of sport Michael Zorc never had a moment's peace as they were forced to come up with answers to a host of thorny personnel issues. In short, they were multi-tasking firefighters.

So many big decisions for the pair to resolve in such a short space of time. Who to appoint as coach after sacking Thomas Tuchel? What tactics to employ to keep star striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang out of the clutches of his many suitors? How best to clean up the mess caused by Barcelona's bid for attacking whizz-kid Ousmane Dembele ▸

Selfie...Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang celebrates last season's German Cup success

Principles...Hans-Joachim Watzke (left) and Michael Zorc

and the latter's strike action to force the transfer through?

It says much for the nerve, principles and ingenuity of Watzke and Zorc that they have emerged from all the tumult with their reputations very much intact. New coach Peter Bosz, formerly at the Ajax helm, has already struck a positive chord with the players. The decision to only put Aubameyang in the shop window for a few weeks in the close season was

> "Others buy world stars. We make them"
> **Hans-Joachim Watzke, Borussia Dortmund's CEO**

undoubtedly a key factor in retaining him. And top dollar was extracted from the Dembele sale, holding out until Barca met their demands of €104million plus €42m of add-ons.

Of course, the Ruhr kingpins will miss Dembele. Last season, his first at the club following a €15m move from French side Rennes, he was often their in-house game-changer, scoring 10 goals in all competitions and creating another 21. However, once he had downed tools, there was simply no way back. At just 20, he still has it all to prove, and to ease the pain Dortmund made a substantial profit – thought to be in the region of €65m after Rennes took their cut.

Watzke summed up the Dortmund approach to buying and selling in a recent interview with *Sport-Bild* magazine, saying: "Others buy world stars. We make them. The growth in transfer fees is insane, though not immoral. It's the market which dictates."

Although in rude financial health – they recently posted a record turnover of €405.7m for 2016-17, up almost eight per cent – BVB are well aware of their balance-sheet limitations. Compared to the likes of Bayern Munich, the great and the good of the Premier League, Real Madrid, Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain, they are very much a second-tier European power.

Mindful of their place in the food chain, the *Dortmunder* believe they have no choice but to recruit smarter, hence their obsession with fledgling talent. It's a relatively easy sell too, with a sumptuous range of goodies on offer; from the club's faith in youth and Champions League action, to Bundesliga prominence and the chance to play for a club whose Westfalenstadion home ranks among the most atmospheric in Europe.

Passionate... Dortmund fans

"Our primary aim is not to have the rawest squad at the top end of the European game," said Zorc earlier this year. "But we do realise that we cannot simply go out and buy ready-made stars.

"We also have to develop talent. We have shown that we are willing to give youngsters a chance to play at the highest level."

A perfect example of that philosophy is teenage American winger Christian Pulisic. After excelling in the club's youth ranks, he was only 17 when handed his senior debut in January 2016. Just 18 months later, he is now a player they cannot do without, a package of

outstanding skill, speed and instincts on the right flank.

Of their seven signings in the latest transfer window, five were aged 23 or younger. All were wanted elsewhere, but all were desperate to sign up for the Dortmund elite development programme.

Zorc and chief scout Sven Mislintat can only be commended for the excellent crop of new arrivals this summer.

Freiburg's Maximilian Philipp has settled in extremely well on the wing; turbo-charged former Hoffenheim right-back Jeremy Toljan was arguably Germany's best player as they won the European Under-21 title this summer; teen wide-man Jadon Sancho, prised away from Manchester City, is a genuine rough diamond; Mahmoud Dahoud was a box-to-box marvel at Borussia Monchengladbach; while France under-18 skipper Dan-Axel Zagadou can play anywhere in defence and joined on a free from Paris Saint-Germain.

That's not to say that this reliance on youth is a panacea. Some would argue that Dortmund are stockpiling young guns and, inevitably, a number will fall by the wayside. Last season, for example, Turkish winger Emre Mor and Spanish defensive midfielder Mikel Merino got little game time and had to move on, recently joining Celta Vigo and Newcastle United respectively.

For all the "Boystown" quips, Dortmund also appreciate a veteran as much as anybody. Long-serving full-backs Lukasz Piszczek and Marcel Schmelzer still have much to offer, while Turkish playmaker Nuri Sahin, on the club's books for a decade-and-a-half over three spells, is back to his best after a couple of seasons in the shadows.

The quest for established international know-how was evident in their end-of-August swoop for Dynamo Kiev winger Andriy Yarmolenko. Dortmund had him in their sights for more than two years and are convinced that his €25m transfer fee represents value for money. He might not have Dembele's mazy dribbling skills or free-spirited ways, yet he could deliver just as much with his forceful physique, educated left foot and flair on the counter. Yarmolenko has a fine all-round game and, provided he quickly finds his bearings in Germany, he could be exactly what Dortmund need: a powerful and incisive front-line complement to marksman-in chief Aubameyang.

One would-be sticking point is Yarmolenko's preference for cutting in from the right, while the Dembele-inspired vacancy is on the other side. Someone will have to compromise.

What Dortmund desperately need at the moment is a period of stability. Last season was essentially a catalogue of one emergency segueing into another: ultras shamefully targeting RB Leipzig fans; a bomb attack on the team bus before a Champions League quarter-final against Monaco; Watzke receiving death threats from a hard-right hooligan group; the simmering, sulphurous atmosphere in the camp; the crumbling of Thomas Tuchel's relationship with board, technical staff and squad.

Even Watzke, a fighter if ever there was one, admits he was close to reaching the end of his tether. "For the first time in my life, my batteries were completely flat," he revealed in a interview with *Bild am Sonntag*. "If we'd have lost the German Cup Final, I definitely would have resigned."

If Watzke's enthusiasm is flowing once again, he largely attributes his upbeat mood to the relaxed personality of new coach Bosz. Whereas his predecessor Tuchel could be prickly and aloof, the Dutchman is much more of a communicator, prioritising dialogue and collaboration.

In stark contrast to the front-office theatre, Bosz radiated calm and

New trio...(from left) Dan-Axel Zagadou, Maximilian Philipp and Mahmoud Dahoud

composure on the pre-season training ground. No wild gesticulating on the touchline. No tones of exasperation. Just thoughtful analysis and advice. The players obviously relish working with him. "He's a laid-back guy, a real people person and very correct in his attitude to us all," says Sahin.

Another admirer of Bosz is ex-Dortmund skipper and coach Matthias Sammer, who was most definitely impressed with his low-key reaction to the Dembele hoopla. "As a coach you have to rise above things and in this instance he did very well indeed," Sammer told Eurosport. "He showed charm and authority. That was tip-top on his part."

Calm...Peter Bosz

Bosz certainly has a huge task in front of him. Not only does he have a tactical revolution to oversee – a switch to an Ajax-like 4-3-3 – he must assess the strengths, weaknesses and psychological foibles of his players and adjust to a different league. He also has a massively remodelled squad to come to terms with. This summer, Dortmund completed no fewer than 15 transfers: seven in and eight out.

Boasting 30 professionals of excellent quality, Dortmund have arguably improved their strength in depth this term and will be even more of a force when their long-term injury victims – winger Marco Reus, Portuguese utility man Raphael Guerreiro and midfield regulator Julian Weigl – become fully operational again.

The early signs are that Bosz has the ▸

Value for money... Andriy Yarmolenko

THE POWER CURVE

The key figures behind Dortmund

REINHARD RAUBALL
Locally based lawyer who, since 1979, has had seven mandates as club president. He is also chief of the German Football League and a vice-president at Germany's federation, the DFB.

HANS-JOACHIM WATZKE
On his appointment as chief executive in 2005, "Aki" had to wrestle with the very real threat of bankruptcy. Along with Rauball and chief financial officer Thomas Tress, he did a fine job of pulling the club back from the brink.

MICHAEL ZORC
A BVB midfielder for two decades, he became director of sport in 1998 and still holds that position to this day. An astute talent spotter and hard-nosed negotiator.

GERD PIEPER
Chairman of the supervisory board since 2004 and club vice-president for the past nine years. Runs a thriving perfume business in the Ruhr.

HENDRIE KRUZEN
Peter Bosz's assistant, the pair have worked side-by-side for over 17 years. A left-sided midfielder as a player, he was in the Dutch squad that won Euro 88.

STADIUM: SIGNAL IDUNA PARK

Derby...taking on fierce local rivals Schalke

▼ Bundesliga ▼ 2.Bundesliga

LOCAL RIVALS

1 Bayer Leverkusen
2 Bochum
3 Borussia Dortmund
4 Borussia Monchengladbach
5 Cologne
6 Duisburg
7 Fortuna Dusseldorf
8 Schalke

CAPACITY

Signal Iduna Park
81,360 (Bundesliga fixtures),
65,829 (international fixtures)

Naming rights... Signal Iduna have a long-term deal with the club

More commonly known as the Westfalenstadion, Dortmund's home stadium is a cauldron of noise, colour and full-on passion, a place that never fails to send the senses into overdrive.

Germany's biggest ground, it features the largest standing terrace in the European game: the 24,454-capacity Sudtribune, aka "The Yellow Wall".

At 79,653, Dortmund had the highest average league attendance of any club in Europe last season, although the capacity is reduced when the Sudtribune is made all-seating for international games.

A long-term naming-rights deal with insurers Signal Iduna has helped to bring financial stability to the club after a brush with near bankruptcy on the eve of the 2006 World Cup, when the stadium hosted six games – including the semi-final in which Italy beat Germany 2-0.

The stadium actually dates back to the previous World Cup held in Germany, in 1974. Before then, Dortmund played at the nearby Stadion Rote Erde, an old-school municipal track-and-field ground which is now used by the club's reserves.

When Dortmund was preferred to Cologne as a host city for the 1974 World Cup, long-term plans for a home fit for a thriving Bundesliga side could finally be drawn up. The new stadium opened in the spring of 1974 with a match against local rivals Schalke.

Taking its name from its locality – the region of North-Rhine Westphalia – the Westfalenstadion's original capacity of 54,000 has been gradually increased, mainly thanks to the upper tiers added to the two sideline stands. The hosting of the 2006 World Cup led to further improvements, including five video screens and undersoil heating.

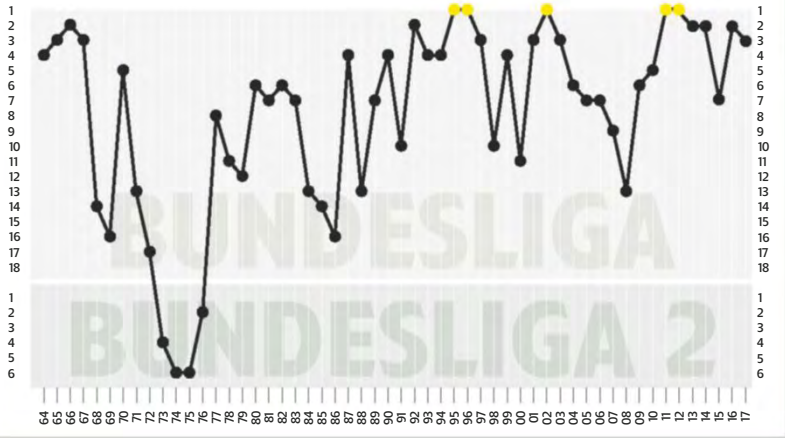
The geographical proximity of Schalke's AufSchalke Arena in Gelsenkirchen ensures that the local rivalry remains the fiercest in the Bundesliga.

Dortmund is at the heart of the industrial Ruhr Valley region, which is host to one the world's deepest concentration of club sides.

In addition to Schalke, there are local derbies with Bundesliga sides Cologne, Bayer Leverkusen and Borussia Monchengladbach, while 2.Bundesliga features Bochum, Duisburg and Fortuna Dusseldorf.

the numbers game

BORUSSIA DORTMUND 1963-present



HONOURS

WORLD CLUB CUP:
1997

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE:
1997

EUROPEAN CUP-WINNERS CUP:
1966

GERMAN CUP:
1965, 1989, 2012, 2017

GERMAN SUPER CUP:
1989, 1995, 1996, 2013, 2014

Good start...Nuri Sahin (out of picture) scores against Hertha Berlin

full measure of the job. Beginning the new Bundesliga campaign with two impressive wins – 3-0 at Wolfsburg and 2-0 at home to Hertha Berlin – his side looked organised and solid at the back, full of ideas going forward and generally played with remarkable collective control.

Despite time being tight, the contours of the team's new identity are already crystallising: the compact shape, the high defensive line, the pressing of the opposition deep in their own half, the superfast transitions, the care in possession. Their pressing game still needs some fine tuning, and their build-up play can lack tempo at times, but on the whole Bosz is making a difference.

With their eyes on the prize of at least a top-two finish in the Bundesliga, Dortmund will be especially dependent on major contributions from luminaries such as ball-playing Catalan central defender Marc Bartra, Sahin or Weigl as the central midfield hub, and the creative industry of Mario Gotze, who after his wasted years at Bayern and a lengthy absence last season with a metabolic condition appears to be in renaissance mode.

And then there is Aubameyang, the top scorer in the Bundesliga last season with 31 goals. Rumoured to be on the verge of a move to China, the Premier League, PSG or Milan, the Gabonese sharpshooter was probably not expecting to still be with BVB. But one thing he does enjoy is putting the ball in the back of the net, and whether it be at Dortmund or elsewhere he will always go flat out for goals. Such is his nature, that of the smiling assassin.

"Aubameyang gives Dortmund 20 per cent extra," says former club coach Ottmar Hitzfeld. "He is Peter Bosz's life insurance. He's Dortmund's most important player. Other guys can be replaced. Not him.

Renaissance...Mario Gotze (left) takes an ice bath after training

"He is omnipresent. He can make chances out of impossible situations and doesn't necessarily rely on team-mates for service. When Watzke insists that Aubameyang is going to stay until the end of this season, that's a clear signal.

"Dortmund are sending out a challenge to Bayern Munich. They are saying: 'We are holding onto Aubameyang and will be German champions.'"

Will Hitzfeld be proved right about Dortmund's title chances? Next spring, we'll have the answer. WS

THE COACH

PETER BOSZ
Age 53 (21.11.63)
After a decade-and-a-half of relatively unheralded technical-area work in Holland with AGOVV, De Graafschap, Heracles and Vitesse, and then in Israel with Maccabi Tel Aviv, he achieved his big break in May 2016 when he took charge of Ajax.

With his love of attacking football and belief in young players, he proved a good fit at the Amsterdam club, and to crown his inaugural campaign he led them to the Final of the Europa League.

Capped eight times by Holland as a hard-working midfielder, he also had two-and-a-half years as technical director at Feyenoord.

This season he became the first coach in the history of the Bundesliga to guide his side to a clean sheet in his first five games in charge.

THE KIT

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS

Roman BURKI (Swi)
Age 26 (14.11.90)
Arrived from Freiburg in the summer of 2015, replacing Weidenfeller as first choice.

Dominik REIMANN
Age 20 (18.06.97)
On the club's books since the age of seven. Played for Germany in this year's under-20 World Cup in South Korea.

Roman WEIDENFELLER
Age 37 (06.08.80)
BVB's number one for 11 seasons, playing a key role in two titles and the path to the 2013 Champions League Final.

DEFENDERS

Marc BARTRA (Spa)
Age 26 (15.01.91)
Centre-back recruited from Barcelona last year in an €8m deal. Suffered a broken wrist in last season's bomb blast.

Erik DURM
Age 25 (12.05.92)
Full-back or defensive midfielder, a summer move to Stuttgart fell through over doubts about the state of his knees.

Raphael GUERREIRO (Por)
Age 23 (22.12.93)
Left-back or midfielder in his second season with BVB. Suffered a broken leg in June but due to return soon.

Sokratis PAPASTATHOPOULOS (Gre)
Age 29 (09.06.88)
Centre-back renowned for his tenacity. Infamous for a training ground brawl with Marko Arnautovic while at Werder Bremen in 2013.

Lukasz PISZCZEK (Pol)
Age 32 (03.06.85)
Striker who was converted into a right-back at Hertha Berlin and is in line to rack up his 300th appearance for Dortmund this season.

Marcel SCHMELZER
Age 29 (22.01.88)
Feisty, dynamic left-back and loyal club servant for the last dozen years. Was a favourite of former coach Jurgen Klopp.

Jeremy TOLJAN
Age 23 (08.08.94)
Full-back capable of building up an attacking head of steam on either flanks. Bought from Hoffenheim for €5m.

Omer TOPRAK (Tur)
Age 28 (21.07.89)
Centre-half signed from Bayer Leverkusen this summer for €12m. A leader and a stabiliser but prone to injury.

Dan-Axel ZAGADOU (Fra)
Age 18 (03.06.99)
Can play anywhere at the back. Chose to join Dortmund this summer rather than turn pro at Paris Saint-Germain.

MIDFIELDERS

Gonzalo CASTRO
Age 30 (11.06.87)
Former right-back, now a central midfield link-man. Born to Spanish parents, he has five full caps for Germany.

Mahmoud DAHOUD
Age 21 (01.01.96)
Engine room all-rounder signed from Borussia Monchengladbach. Born in Syria but lived in Germany for all bar 10 months.

Mario GOTZE
Age 25 (03.06.92)
Attacking midfielder or "false nine" who scored Germany's winning goal in the 2014 World Cup Final against Argentina.

Shinji KAGAWA (Jap)
Age 28 (17.03.89)
In his second spell at the club, a fans favourite with energy, thrust and ideas. Struggled in two seasons at Manchester United.

Nuri SAHIN (Tur)
Age 29 (05.09.88)
Deep-lying playmaker whose career has been blighted by injury. Bosz was his technical director at Feyenoord.

Julian WEIGL
Age 22 (08.09.85)
Since pitching up from 1860 Munich in 2015, he has impressed with his defence-screening duties and impeccable distribution.

FORWARDS

Pierre-Emerick AUBAMEYANG (Gab)
Age 28 (18.06.89)
In the course of his four years at Dortmund, he has gone from uncoordinated speedster to free-scoring leader of the line.

Alexander ISAK (Swe)
Age 18 (21.09.99)
Exciting centre-forward recruited from AIK earlier this year, allegedly turning down Real Madrid in the process.

Maximilian PHILIPP
Age 23 (01.03.94)
Signed from Freiburg for €20m. Has been lining up on the left flank, although he is equally at home on the other wing.

Christian PULISIC (USA)
Age 19 (18.09.98)
Right-winger who became the second youngest non-German to score in the Bundesliga, aged 17 years, six months and 30 days.

Marco REUS
Age 28 (31.05.89)
The wide-man dribbling machine has so much natural talent but also has a fragile physique and is out of action until 2018.

Andre SCHURRLE
Age 26 (06.11.90)
A €30m purchase from Wolfsburg a year ago, the German international left-winger has struggled to make an impact.

Andriy YARMOLENKO (Ukr)
Age 27 (23.10.89)
Powerful yet adroit winger who has been capped more than 70 times for his country and scored over 30 international goals.

(ages as of 06.10.17)

Glenn Moore

The Old Lady's new team

Juventus Women join Serie A

"The Old Lady" finally has a ladies' team and their debut campaign looks like being one of the stories of the new season. Juventus have been known as "*La Vecchia Signora*" since the 1930s, having been founded in 1897, but only this season have they had a female team.

In a surprise move, Juve bought the licence of established women's Serie A side Cuneo in the summer and moved the team 50 miles to Turin, bringing in Rita Guarino – an ex-Italy international and then coach of the Italian women's under-17s – to re-build the team.

Guarino has been very active, recruiting a core of players from the 2014 and 2016 champions Brescia, and adding a sprinkling of overseas talent such as seasoned internationals Ingvild Isaksen of Norway and Finland's Tuija Hyyrynen, along with some promising youngsters. These include Katie Zelem, who came through the youth ranks at Manchester United but then left for Liverpool as United do not have an adult female team.

Guarino's side play their home games at Juventus' Vinovo training complex and began with an Italian Cup derby against Torino, who are long-established but not linked with the men's team of the same name and play in the regional Serie B. Juventus demonstrated the huge gulf in class by winning 21-0 on aggregate.

Brescia, who are independent, and current champions Fiorentina, who are in their third season of being backed by the men's team and have signed 18-year-old Ellie Brazil from Birmingham City, will be Juve's main rivals for the Serie A title.

Milena Bertolini, who took over from Antonio Cabrini as national coach after Euro 2017, believes Juventus' involvement in the women's game should be of great significance, stating: "Juventus is a new team but very important for the women's football movement. We can only thank the *Bianconeri* for their push into women's football."

Bertolini, who named six Juventus players in her first national squad, adds: "There has been more talk in the media in the past two months than in the last few years and the fact that a major club like Juventus has taken this opportunity to be at the forefront will surely push the entire movement on.

"In the past, conditions have been absent for girls to develop here in Italy. I think that may change."

> "The fact that a major club like Juventus has taken this opportunity to be at the forefront will surely push the entire movement on"
>
> Italy coach Milena Bertolini on Juve starting a women's team

Long term, Juventus are clearly aiming to make an impact in Europe, but they have some ground to cover to catch up with current champions Lyon. The French side have strengthened again this summer, bringing in Shanice Van de Sanden, one of the stars of the Dutch Euro 2017 title win from Liverpool, and Lucy Bronze, the impressive England and Manchester City defender.

Lyon will, however, be without Caroline Seger, who has returned to Sweden, and strikers Pauline Bremer of Germany, who was traded in part-exchange for Bronze, and USA superstar Alex Morgan. But there is still plenty of attacking excellence left, the more so with Ada Hegerberg "taking a break" from representing Norway due to dissatisfaction with the Norwegian FA's support of the women's team. There is also growing speculation that Morgan will ultimately be replaced by another American, Morgan Brian, who was the subject of a shock recent move from Houston Dash to Chicago Red Stars.

Lyon's strongest challengers, both at home and abroad, could be Montpellier, who were last season's Ligue 1 runners-up. Despite being absent from Europe this season, Paris Saint-Germain should also be in the mix domestically, having retained most of their squad and added Jenni Hermoso from Barcelona, with Natasa Andonova going the other way.

Andonova was one of several Barca recruits, along with Lieke Martens, the newly crowned Euro 2017 Player of the Tournament and UEFA Player of the Year, and England's Toni Duggan. Runners-up to Atletico Madrid last season, they have also signed French midfielder Elise Bussaglia from Wolsburg and Atletico defender Mapi Leon.

UEFA's odd seeding process meant Atletico faced German champions Wolfsburg in the Champions League round of 32, while Frauen Bundesliga runners-up Bayern Munich met Chelsea.

The English side, winners of the interim Spring Series, went into the first winter FA Women's Super League with a new home, Kingsmeadow in Surrey, shared with third-tier men's team AFC Wimbledon but now owned by Chelsea. Coach Emma Hayes added to her spring

Euro winner...Shanice Van de Sanden

Star signing...Arsenal's Vivianne Miedema

Derby...Katie Rood of Juventus (left) in action against Torino

recruitment by bringing in Swedish defender Magdalena Eriksson and Norway's Maria Thorisdottir.

The most spectacular signing was made by Arsenal, who are seeking a first title since 2012. Vivianne Miedema joined from Bayern before Euro 2017, but two goals in the Final have added to her lustre. The Gunners also recruited Sweden's Jessica Samuelsson from Linkopings and Lisa Evans of Scotland from Bayern, while Josephine Henning returned from Lyon.

Manchester City, winners of last summer's WSL, have trimmed their squad but that should give more space to young talent such as Georgia Stanway and Kiera Walsh.

Everton, who were Arsenal's main challengers a decade ago, are back in the top flight and have marked their return by moving towards full-time status. Tottenham Hotspur, promoted into WSL 2 are also showing signs of taking the women's game seriously.

That will please the FA as yet another re-vamp is on the way, with proposals to make inclusion in WSL dependent on being full-time and running an academy. This could be brought in as early as next season, which risks making relegation and promotion this season irrelevant.

Current WSL 1 clubs such as Sunderland, who have downgraded their women's team by moving them out of the men's club's training complex, are likely to struggle to fulfil such requirements, as are Yeovil Town. WS

Round-up

Gone...England's game against Russia was Mark Sampson's last as manager

SAMPSON SACKED BY FA

Hours after overseeing a 6-0 defeat of Russia to kick-off the 2019 World Cup qualifying campaign, England's Mark Sampson was fired after the Football Association had looked more closely at historic allegations of "inappropriate behaviour" in his previous role at WSL club Bristol Academy (now Bristol City).

Hew was said to have "crossed the boundaries" in relationships with players and the FA determined that, while he had done nothing illegal and was free to work in football, his conduct unbecoming of an England manager.

Sampson was already embroiled in allegations of bullying and racist behaviour made by 102-capped Eniola Aluko, a furore that rumbled on despite two investigations clearing him.

DIACRE TAKES CHARGE

Olivier Echouafni failed to survive France's premature Euro 2017 exit and was fired 10 days before completing a year as coach. He

National job... Corinne Diacre

was replaced by Corinne Diacre, a former international who came to prominence when appointed coach of Clermont Foot, a men's Ligue 2 club in 2014, a position she held successfully until joining *Les Bleues*.

DISPUTES AND RESOLUTIONS

Denmark cancelled a friendly against Holland in what would have been a repeat of the Euro 2017 Final after the players refused to appear due to a financial dispute with their FA.

Deal...Australian sides Northern Tigers (in stripes) and Blacktown Spartans

A temporary deal ensured they did play a subsequent World Cup qualifier in Hungary a few days later, winning 6-1.

Australian players, meanwhile, have secured a new deal for their domestic league which features a significant salary increase, minimum medical standards and a maternity policy

STEPPING DOWN

Several cap centurions quit international football after Euro 2017, including Germany's Anja Mittag (158 caps), England's Alex Scott (140), Elodie Thomis (141) of France, and Scotland's Gemma Fay (203), Ifeoma Dieke (122) and Leanne Ross (133).

NEW-LOOK HOLDERS BOOK HOME GAME IN PLAY-OFFS

Carolina Courage – defending the title they won last year in the guise of New York Western Flash – and Portland Thorns earned home games in the NWSL play-off semi-finals, with Chicago Red Stars and Orlando Pride making up the quartet.

Cross...Courage midfielder Makenzy Doniak

ROAD TO RUSSIA

SAUDI ARABIA HEAD TO FINALS WITH A NEW BOSS

If the destination is more important than the journey, nobody told Asia as the final stage of World Cup qualification provided excitement, drama and recrimination.

The continent has now filled its four automatic allocations for Russia 2018, with continental champions Australia missing out after failing to finish in the top two of the six-team Group B.

Away to Japan in the penultimate round of games, either team could secure a top-two spot with a victory, but in the end it was the hosts who were celebrating, winning 2-0 despite leaving Keisuke Honda, Shinji Kagawa and Shinji Okazaki on the bench.

That left one automatic spot left for the Socceroos and Saudi Arabia to fight over five days later.

With the two sides level on points, the Middle Easterners had a better goal difference but Australia were confident they could make up the deficit by thrashing Thailand in Melbourne. But even though they had more than 40 attempts on goal, Ange Postecoglou's team could only manage a 2-1 win – which meant a Saudi victory at home to Japan would see Australia finish third.

Through...Yosuke Ideguchi scores Japan's second goal against Australia

Postecoglou bore the brunt of the criticism in Australia, with the main accusation being that he had been experimenting when he should have been focused firmly on getting to Russia.

Fans in Saudi Arabia were far happier with their more pragmatic boss, Bert Van Marwijk, as they celebrated a return to the World Cup for the first time since 2006. Yet incredibly, just one week later, the Dutchman was heading home when negotiations over a new contract with the Saudi FA broke down. The organisation

Success...Saudi Arabia players celebrate after beating Japan

Chokers...Vitaliy Denisov (right) and Uzbekistan fail yet again

wanted a change in his coaching staff and required Van Marwijk to spend more time in the country to monitor players and prepare his squad.

He has now been replaced by Edgardo Bauza. Sacked by Argentina in April, the 59-year-old was appointed by the United Arab Emirates in May and is now going to Russia – assuming he lasts that long.

If Postecoglou wants to join him, Australia will need to get past Syria in the third-place play-off and then beat the fourth-place side from the CONCACAF region in November.

Syria were just a goal away from automatic qualification themselves before settling for third place.

Iran dominated Group A and qualified

> Saudi Arabia celebrated a return to the World Cup for the first time since 2006

with two games to spare, but Syria took an early lead in Tehran and were on course for Russia until Sardar Azmoun scored twice for the hosts. An equaliser from Omar Al Soma put the men from Damascus into the play-off. And for a team that had been unable to play at home for obvious reasons – and, until the last two or three games, were missing key players due to political reasons – to even finish third was impressive.

South Korea took second place in what was a far from impressive campaign in which they collected just 15 points from their 10 games. Just two of those came away from home and that form cost coach Uli Stielike his job in June, with two games remaining.

Shin Tae-yong came in and did just enough, with goalless draws at home to Iran and away to Uzbekistan seeing the Koreans scrape through to a ninth successive tournament.

For Uzbekistan, it was a familiar feeling of frustration. A win at home to South Korea would have taken the former Soviet Republic to a first-ever World Cup, but, after failing yet again, they will have to live with the label of being Asia's chokers for some years to come.

John Duerden

PLAY-OFFS BECKON FOR ITALY

Having been run over by a high-speed train at the Bernabeu in their Group G qualifier against Spain, Italy will have to settle for second spot in their group and a place in the play-offs.

Defeat in Madrid was always possible, but the comprehensive manner of Italy's capitulation in a 3-0 rout prompted a great deal of nationwide dismay and soul-searching. The defeat ended the *Azzurri*'s 56-match unbeaten run in World Cup and European Championship qualifiers – a record stretching back to a loss to France 11 years ago.

A little over 12 months ago, Italy saw off Spain with an emphatic 2-0 second-round win at Euro 2016. A year on, how could they be so tactically, technically and mentally overwhelmed by the same opponents? For the second time in five months, following Juventus' defeat by Real Madrid in the Champions League Final, Spanish football delivered a devastating lesson to its Italian rivals.

In the aftermath of the Bernabeu debacle there was a deluge of criticism, aimed alternatively at coach Giampiero Ventura, keeper Gianluigi Buffon, Napoli winger Lorenzo Insigne, Milan defender Leonardo Bonucci and others.

When Italy drew 1-1 with Spain in Turin a year earlier, many critics felt that Ventura had been too conservative in his tactics. This time, in a do-or-die situation in which his side had to win, Ventura did not lack courage.

Adopting a daring 4-2-4 set-up, he threw every attacking ace at his disposal into the game, fielding a front four that consisted of Antonio Candreva and Insigne flanking Ciro Immobile and Andrea Belotti. All in all, they were four of the best and most in-form attackers currently in Italian football.

Opener...Isco scores for Spain

Unfortunately for Ventura, the gamble failed totally. Out-manned in midfield, Italy found themselves under relentless pressure in defence, while the front four simply did not see enough of the ball.

In the past, Italian sides have stuck at it and managed to ride out seemingly impossible situations. But this time they shot themselves in the foot after just 13 minutes, with Isco's not-so-fiercely struck free-kick beating a 39-year-old Buffon who looked ponderous in his failed attempt at a save.

One of the most difficult questions to emerge from that defeat concerns Buffon and whether the years have finally caught up with a player who, for much of the past 20 years, has been one of the best keepers in the world. It is not a question that many were asking after Euro 2016 in France last summer, nor indeed after Juve's run to the Champions League Final this year. However, painful as it is, the question now presents itself.

> If Italy do qualify for the 2018 finals, are they better going to Russia with an ageing Buffon or has the time come to promote Milan's Gigio Donnarumma?

One imagines that, for the time being, Buffon and Ventura will both hope for a return to normal service. Yet, the almost heretical question must still be asked: if Italy do qualify for the 2018 finals, are they better going to Russia with an ageing Buffon or has the time come to promote Milan's Gigio Donnarumma?

Other shortcomings concerned iconic defender Bonucci and in-form schemer Insigne. Deprived of service, the latter had little or no impact, while Bonucci may still be absorbing the effects of his surprise move from Juventus to Milan.

At risk...have the years finally caught up with Gianluigi Buffon?

Gamble...Leonardo Spinazzola (left) was picked at full-back

Furthermore, the choice of Atalanta's Leonardo Spinazzola at left-back represented a gamble, given that this was the player's first competitive game of the season. His defensive difficulties meant he had little chance to offer attacking support to Insigne down the left, while he finished an exhausting game with cramp.

In the end, it has to be remembered that Italy went down to a sublime Spain in which two-goal Isco had the game of a lifetime, and a lot of teams would have gone into meltdown when faced with the quality of Julen Lopetegui's side.

A lot of teams, yes, but in the past Italian teams have done better.

Clearly, all is not lost. A place in the play-offs beckons. But while potential opponents such as Sweden, Bosnia, Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland are not Brazil, Argentina, Germany or Spain, November's two-legged affair will still represent a huge test.

Paddy Agnew

TICKETS ON SALE BUT QUESTIONS REMAIN

Locals...fans at the 2017 Confederations Cup

Ticket sales are under way for the World Cup finals next year. As before, FIFA and the hosts are selling individual match tickets, venue-specific and team-specific series.

However, several questions remain for Russian organisers.

Firstly, will they arrange new flight paths so fans can fly directly between regional venues rather than having to connect through Moscow? And will the promised system of free trains for ticket holders be ready in time to save fans costs on internal travel?

During the Confederations Cup earlier this year, the Russia 2018 local organising committee was proud to hand out free train tickets. But the take-up was mostly from home fans as foreign supporters had already paid for their own travel far in advance.

Foreign fans attending the finals need to know about trains when they book their flights and hotels. Otherwise the Russians will incur some critical headlines. And as organising CEO Alexey Sorokin knows only too well, there are plenty of critics out there looking to put the boot in.

> Fans need to know about trains when they book flights and hotels

Keir Radnedge

Nearly there...the World Cup countdown clock in front of Red Square and the Kremlin in Moscow

SEVEN IN A ROW FOR *EL TRI*

Mexico qualified for their seventh successive World Cup with three games to spare after beating Panama 1-0 in the Estadio Azteca while the USA crashed to a 2-0 defeat by Costa Rica in New Jersey.

The comfortable qualification for *El Tri* was in stark contrast to four years ago, when everything went down to the wire and a play-off against New Zealand after Mexico finished fourth in the final CONCACAF "hexagonal" qualifying group.

Early qualification this time gave Mexico's Colombian coach Juan Carlos Osorio the chance to experiment with home-based players in October's final qualifying games against Trinidad & Tobago and Honduras.

In contrast, the United States, reeling from their loss to Costa Rica, needed a late equaliser from substitute Bobby Wood to take a point from their visit to Honduras four days later. Those poor results left Bruce Arena's side in fourth place and needing to beat third-place Panama in their penultimate Hexagonal game to avoid a play-off against Australia or Syria.

Through...Hirving Lozano celebrates scoring for Mexico against Panama

It has not been all plain sailing for Mexico under Osorio. They were thrashed 7-0 by Chile at the 2016 Copa America Centenario and failed to sparkle at the Confederations Cup in Russia, where Osorio collected a six game-ban for aggressive behaviour on the touchline. At this summer's Gold Cup, a Mexican B team crashed out to Jamaica in the semi-finals.

Promising... Edson Alvarez

Osorio has been backed by the Mexican federation on his insistence that World Cup qualification was the team's priority. But he has faced criticism in the press – with Hugo Sanchez and former national coach Ricardo La Volpe sniping from the sidelines – and from fans in the stands.

Much of the hostility towards Osorio has centred on his passion for squad rotation. He has used 63 players since he took charge of the national side in October 2015 and only a small, core group of European-based players have played in a majority of games.

The 56-year-old claims he learned the importance of player rotation when spying on Gerard Houllier's training sessions at Liverpool while a student at the city's John Moores University.

A former fitness coach for Kevin Keegan's Manchester City, Osorio has worked his way up the hard way. Atletico Nacional's 2015 Sudamericana Cup is his greatest success to date and he has struggled to win over the Mexican football establishment in what is the biggest job of his career so far.

Yet despite the snipers, Osorio has the highest win percentage among Mexican coaches of recent times and he now has the luxury of having time to spare while preparing for next summer's finals.

He has plenty of options in attack, where Hirving Lozano, who scored the goal against Panama that clinched qualification and who is thriving at PSV in Holland, competes with Javier Hernandez, Carlos Vela, Jesus Corona and Raul Jimenez. They are the main contenders to form the front three in an energetic, high-pressing 4-3-3 formation.

> Confusion surrounds the status of veteran defender Rafael Marquez, 38, who has denied alleged links to a drugs-trafficking organisation

The coach has more concerns about midfield and defence, where a number of his players are not getting game time at their clubs in Europe. Hector Herrera and Diego Reyes at Porto, and Hector Moreno at Roma, are struggling to hold down first-team places, while goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa's career has stalled at Standard Liege in Belgium.

Versatile 19-year-old defender Edson Alvarez looks promising but

Time to experiment...Juan Carlos Osorio

confusion surrounds the status of veteran defender Rafael Marquez, 38, who has denied alleged links to a drugs-trafficking organisation.

Plenty of challenges lie ahead as Osorio's Mexico seek to break the glass ceiling that has seen them dominate qualifying campaigns, only to fail to make an impact in the later stages of the finals.

John Holmesdale

QUINTEROS PAYS THE PRICE

Going...Gustavo Quinteros

Ecuador acrimoniously replaced coach Gustavo Quinteros after losing to Brazil and Peru in September's qualifiers.

Quinteros had come under pressure to resign following those defeats but he would not budge, so the FA took to Twitter to announce that, in the light of his "indifference" when "appeals were made to his sensitivity", Quinteros was no longer in charge of the national team. Another Argentinian, Jorge Celico, who had recently been appointed the country's youth supremo, was put in charge for the final two qualifiers.

There are, however, financial implications to Quinteros' removal. By the terms of his contract, a sacking would bring him a pay-off of a reported $500,000, so it appears that, as a cheaper option, he might be kept on the payroll until his contract runs out at the end of the year.

Although Ecuador were early leaders of the South American qualification table, having won all four of their opening fixtures, their recent decline under Quinteros had been alarming, with the next 12 games bringing just two more wins, a pair of draws and eight defeats.

While oscillations are inevitable in a marathon campaign that is played over the course of three seasons, this is especially true of a country like Ecuador, which has a limited pool of talent to call upon. The big fear for a coach of such a team is that too many key players lose form and fitness at the same time.

This was true for Quinteros with regard to the centre-back positions, where Ecuador have little strength in depth. With the retirement of Ivan Hurtado, who held the defence together for so long, Quinteros sought to bring the defensive line higher, thereby making the team more compact. But then he lost another centre-back, Fricson Erazo, who featured in the first six games before running into prolonged injury problems.

It was a similar story in attack. Left-winger Jefferson Montero was in fine form at the start of the campaign. But, bar a five-minute substitute appearance in March, he only played in the first eight games before he too was injured.

Another big loss has been Miller Bolanos. Used as a support striker, playing off the centre- forward in a 4-2-3-1 set-up and floating between the front and the midfield lines, he played in those first four wins, but then struggled after moving to Gremio in Brazil, with both form and fitness being a problem.

> In protest at the replacement of Quinteros, Felipe Caicedo announced his retirement from international football

In Bolanos' absence there has been a tendency to play Felipe Caicedo and Enner Valencia together – and, apart from Valencia's loss of form and confidence while he was playing his club football in England, having both in the same starting XI tended to leave the team top heavy.

That, however, is not a problem that new boss Celico will have to deal with. In protest at the replacement of Quinteros, Caicedo, who had been Ecuador's top scorer in this campaign with seven goals, announced his retirement from international football.

Tim Vickery

World Soccer vintage 16 years ago

October 2001

Holland miss out on another big finals tournament

Hernan Crespo, top scorer in Argentina's successful World Cup qualifying campaign, was the cover star. However, one team who would not be going to Japan and South Korea was Holland.

Simon Kuper grew up in Holland in an era when they failed to qualify for the World Cup in 1981 (losing to France) and 1985 (losing to Belgium), and he tried to explain why the Dutch had now failed to reach the 2002 finals.

"Those defeats weren't half as shameful as the 1-0 loss to the Republic of Ireland which put Holland out," wrote Kuper. "In 1981 Holland lost because the great generation of the 1970s had grown old. In 1985 it was because [Ruud] Gullit and co weren't ready yet."

According to Kuper, there was no excuse for defeat at Lansdowne Road.

"You don't lose a World Cup in just one match," he acknowledged. "That the *Oranje* went to Dublin needing to win in the first place was due to arrogance.

"Arrogance, because after Euro 2000 Holland had taken to assuming that turning up would generally ensure victory. The Dutch tend to view football as a sort of dry synchronised swimming, a sport in which points are awarded on aesthetic grounds. That wasn't going to work against Portugal."

Portugal had won 2-0 in Rotterdam and Ireland had drawn in Amsterdam. A year later, the Irish hammered the final nail into the Dutch coffin.

"Holland could still easily have got the three points in Dublin," explained Kuper. "In the first half they were brilliant, creating a cavalcade of chances, reminding us that much the same players had got within a couple of penalty kicks of the Final of the last European Championship and World Cup. Then Arthur Numan was carried off with a head injury. For several minutes Holland played with 10 men and they chose to waste time. The battered Irish were delighted to let this happen.

"When Numan returned, Holland's rhythm had gone. They hadn't yet scored and they began to worry. On the bench, coach Louis Van Gaal panicked and replaced wingers Marc Overmars and Boudewijn Zenden with centre-forwards Pierre Van Hooijdonk and Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink. Fielding four centre-forwards and no wingers was a tactic last tried by Germany against Croatia in the World Cup quarter-final of 1998. It didn't work then."

Kuper revealed that after the match, "Van Gaal half-realised what had gone wrong. 'We used the long ball too much,' he told reporters. It's a shame there wasn't an eight-year-old on hand to tell him that with four centre-forwards and no wingers the long ball is what you get."

Concluding, Kuper argued that there was no obvious alternative to take over from Van Gaal, who should therefore stay in the job. Van Gaal himself had said his intention was "to win the World Cup".

"This will not happen," stated Kuper. "To any Dutch football fan just entering adolescence, my advice is to seek your thrills elsewhere." WS

"The Dutch tend to view football as a sort of dry synchronised swimming, a sport in which points are awarded on aesthetic grounds"

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Out...Holland fail to make the 2002 World Cup

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Oranje fail to blossom

Simon Kuper on the reaction as arrogant Holland pay the price

THOSE of us who grew up in Holland at the wrong time spent a fair part of our adolescence crying in front of the TV as the country kept missing out on World Cups.

There was the night of November 18, 1981, when Ruud Krol and Hans Van Breukelen stood staring at each other on the goal-line of Parc des Princes as Michel Platini's free-kick sailed between them.

Then came November 20, 1985, when with five minutes left before we finally reached a World Cup, a young, unmarked Belgian named Georges Grun headed us out of it. I can still see Ruud Gullit kicking the ball angrily into the net, probably convinced he would always remain a strictly local hero.

Two and a half years later, he and Holland were European champions.

However, those defeats weren't half as shameful as the 1-0 loss to the Republic of Ireland on September 1, which put Holland out of the 2002 World Cup.

In 1981 Holland lost because the great generation of the 1970s had grown old. In 1985 it was because Gullit and co weren't ready yet, while the 'missing generation' born in the late 1950s never would be. Moreover, in those days a mere 24 nations qualified for the World Cup.

At Lansdowne Road, however, there was no excuse. A good generation was at its peak, the Dutch style (the attacking passing game with two wingers) so fixed that even Graham Taylor wouldn't be able to change it, and with a World Cup of 32 nations any old idiot can qualify. This time Holland lost because of human error after human error.

You don't lose a World Cup in just one match. That the *Oranje* went to Dublin needing to win in the first place was due to arrogance and Portugal.

Arrogance, because after Euro 2000 Holland had taken to assuming that turning up would generally ensure victory. The Dutch tend to view football as a sort of dry synchronised swimming, a sport in which points are awarded on aesthetic grounds. That wasn't going to work against the excellent Portuguese.

Holland could still easily have got the three points in Dublin. In the first 20 minutes they were brilliant, creating a cavalcade of chances, reminding us that much the same players had got within a couple of penalty kicks of the Final of the last European Championship and World Cup.

Then Arthur Numan was carried off with a head injury. For several minutes Holland played with 10 men, and they chose to waste time, the keeper and defenders passing the ball among each other. The battered Irish were delighted to let this happen. When Numan returned, Holland's rhythm had gone. The game had entered its last half hour, they hadn't yet scored, and they began to worry. On the bench, coach Louis Van Gaal panicked.

The Dutch press has been unanimous in condemning his crazy substitutions. With Holland still needing a goal, Van Gaal replaced wingers Marc Overmars and Boudewijn Zenden with centre-forwards Pierre Van Hooijdonk and Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink. "Powerlessness coupled with stress probably prevented this experienced coach from thinking and acting rationally," commented the usually buttoned up daily *NRC Handelsblad*.

Fielding four centre-forwards and no wingers was a tactic last tried by Germany against Croatia in the World Cup quarter-final of 1998. It didn't work then. Ireland took the lead through Jason McAteer and Holland, playing for the last half hour against 10 Irishmen after Gary Kelly was sent off, ended up pumping long balls forward in a cruel parody of an Irish team of the Dark Ages.

Van Gaal half-realised what had gone wrong. "We used the long ball too much," he told the media. He said that his players hadn't listened to him. It's a shame there wasn't an eight-year-old on hand to tell him that with four centre-forwards and no wingers the long ball is what you get.

The influential weekly magazine *Voetbal International* ran a front cover that screamed: "Louis Van Gaal. Without Credibility."

It wasn't only his fault. "Everything starts with fighting spirit and Holland had too little of that," said the Heerenveen manager Foppe De Haan. Most Dutch commentators agreed. Van Gaal blamed Holland's apathy on the country's "culture and wealth", claiming that Spanish, Irish and German players were feistier. (Many Dutch people labour under the delusion that their country is extraordinarily rich.)

There is a more likely explanation. The reason the Dutch looked so apathetic against Ireland is that some of them subconsciously did not want to make the World Cup. Many of these players were at Euro 96, the French World Cup and Euro 2000. They must have marvelled at the naivety of the Irish, who seemed genuinely to want to spend five weeks locked in a camp in a country with incomprehensible television before being knocked out on penalties and spending the next months nursing the hangover plus injuries.

The Dutch have had enough for a while. What do you give the footballer who has everything? A summer holiday. Two months off in 2002 could renew their interest in football.

The Dutch public was philosophical in defeat. A poll commissioned after the game showed that two-thirds of

Beginning of the end...McAteer leaps

Cancel the party...Dutch fans can't believe their side are out of the World Cup

28 WORLD SOCCER

CUP2002WORLDCUP2002

After scoring the goal that beat Holland

the population thought Van Gaal should stay as manager. The newspapers, though chastising him, mostly avoided the 'He Must Go' headlines so beloved in England and Germany. The Dutch public has a habit of placing surprising faith in its leaders: the Dutch Prime Minister, whoever he is, usually has widespread support too.

Furthermore, there is no obvious alternative to Van Gaal. Johan Cruyff has effectively retired from coaching (though nobody outside Holland seems to realise this), Gullit is not very popular at home, while Guus Hiddink, Frank Rijkaard and Dick Advocaat have already had a go.

Van Gaal has published an open letter to the public on his website homepage. "We're now starting to turn the view to 2004," it says, before asking the fans "to give the players a fair chance". Translated, this means "to give me a fair chance". It looks like he will get it. He deserves it, too: in 10 years with Ajax and Barcelona he proved himself an excellent manager.

On taking the Dutch job last year, Van Gaal was asked what his aim was. "To become world champion," he said. This will not happen. Philip Cocu, the De Boer twins, Jaap Stam, Overmars and Edwin Van der Sar will struggle to make Euro 2004, let alone the 2006 World Cup. There is no wave of talent arriving to replace them.

To any Dutch football fan just entering adolescence, my advice is to seek your thrills elsewhere.

What's gone wrong?...Ruud Van Nistelrooy contemplates another no-show for the Dutch on the world stage

Also in this issue...

p4-5
After a 5-1 England win in Germany, the editorial read: "English football inflicted humiliation on Germany, whose defence crumbled at the lightning quick feet of Michael Owen."

p20-21
Paddy Agnew felt Hernan Crespo should lead Argentina's attack at the World Cup, writing: "Crespo is one of the few strikers on the world scene today who can stand comparison with [Gabriel] Batistuta, one of the few whom one might reasonably pick before Batistuta."

p51
Agnew also reported on promoted Chievo, a club from a Verona suburb of just 4,000 residents who had won their first two Serie A games and were preparing for a clash with Juventus. He wrote: "Their splendid start to their first season in the top flight provided one of those delightful reminders that, if only for a few weeks, even the minnows can come out to play."

p66
Victor Gusev and Oleg Zadernovsky reported on the tragedy of CSKA Moscow's Ukrainian keeper Serhiy Perkhunwho who "died in hospital 10 days after lapsing into a coma following a clash of heads with Anzhi Makhachkala striker Budun Budunov during a league game".

10 years ago

Two late goals from Thierry Henry for France against Lithuania in a qualifier for the 2008 European Championship see him break Michel Platini's record for *Les Bleus* and become his country's all-time top scorer with 43.

20 years ago

A bloodied and bandaged Paul Ince is England's hero of the hour as Glenn Hoddle's team manage to hold out for a goalless draw away to Italy in Rome and secure themselves qualification for the following year's World Cup finals in France.

30 years ago

In one of the dirtiest old-firm derbies of recent times, Rangers and Celtic draw 2-2 at Ibrox. Rangers goalkeeper Chris Woods and Frank McAvennie of Celtic are sent off after 17 minutes, and Terry Butcher receives a red card later in the match.

40 years ago

Five weeks after helping New York Cosmos to the NASL title, Pele brings his career to an end with an exhibition game between Cosmos and his former Brazilian club Santos which is screened live across the USA.

50 years ago

Top of Division One in England a year earlier, Chelsea sack manager Tommy Docherty following 5-1, 6-2 and 7-0 defeats. They replace him with Dave Sexton, whose first game in charge ends in a 3-1 defeat at home to West Ham.

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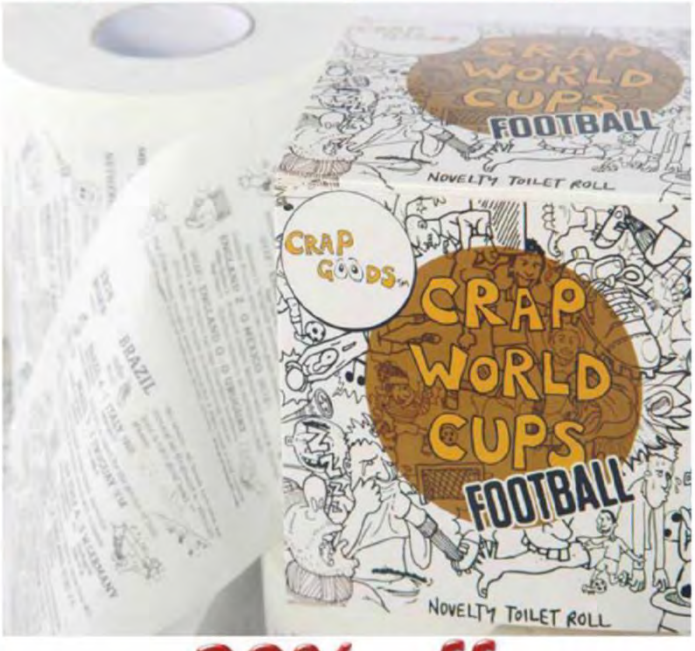

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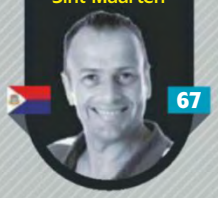
72 TIM VICKERY
Libertdaores Cup

70 JOHN DUERDEN
India

68 SIMON HILL
Australia

STEVE MENARY
Sint Maarten



67

PLUS

68

High hopes... Melbourne Victory's Kosta Barbarouses

DIARY
66 Comprehensive global news

RESULTS, TABLES, FIXTURES
74 Internationals
79 Club football

SQUADS
80 Italy: Serie A

72

Surprise...Jonatan Alvez of Barcelona

August 31-September 25, 2017

Global diary

A comprehensive record of recent events around the world

Thursday August 31

BELGIUM: Playing at right-back, Thomas Meunier scores a hat-trick and sets up three more as Belgium beat Gibraltar 9-0 to equal their biggest-ever margin of victory.
ENGLAND: Premier League clubs' transfer deadline-day spending reaches a new high of £210m, taking their total summer outlay to a record £1.4billion.
FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain sign Monaco's Kylian Mbappe on loan, with an option to buy the 18-year-old for €180m next summer. In the evening, he becomes *Les Bleus*' youngest goalscorer for almost 54 years as France beat Holland 4-0.
IRAN: A 0-0 draw away to South Korea sees Iran set a World Cup qualifying record with a 12th clean sheet in a row.
JAPAN: Goals from Takuma Asano and Yosuke Ideguchi secure a 2-0 win over Australia that seals Japan's sixth successive qualification for the World Cup finals.

Friday September 1

FRANCE: UEFA opens a formal investigation into Paris Saint-Germain as part of its "ongoing monitoring" of clubs and Financial Fairplay rules.
MEXICO: Hirving Lozano scores as Mexico beat Panama 1-0 to book their place at Russia 2018.

Saturday September 2

ITALY: A 3-0 loss in Spain is Italy's first defeat in a World Cup or Euro qualifier for almost 11 years – a run of 56 games.
WALES: Seventeen-year-old Ben Woodburn comes off the bench and scores the only goal of the game against Austria on his debut.

Sunday September 3

BELGIUM: A 2-1 victory away to Greece seals Belgium's place at next year's World Cup.
COSTA RICA: With five minutes to play and hosts Saprissa leading Grecia 6-1, the Estadio Ricardo Saprissa Ayma is evacuated and the game abandoned following a bomb threat – which is later confirmed as a hoax.
LUXEMBOURG: Despite facing 34 shots, goalkeeper Jonathan Joubert keeps a clean sheet as Luxembourg earn a shock 0-0 draw in France.

Monday September 4

ENGLAND: Chelsea omit striker Diego Costa from their squad for the Champions League group stage.

Tuesday September 5

MEXICO: Giovani Dos Santos plays his 100th game for Mexico and scores in a 1-1 draw with Costa Rica.
SPAIN: La Liga's longest-serving coach Diego Simeone signs a two-year contract extension with Atletico Madrid.
WORLD CUP: Saudi Arabia and South Korea book their places at the 2018 World Cup, with a 1-0 win over Japan and a 0-0 draw in Uzbekistan respectively, and Syria's 2-2 draw in Iran takes them into a play-off game against Australia.

Feat...Syria celebrate making the play-off

Wednesday September 6

SOUTH AFRICA: The World Cup qualifier on November 12 last year, in which South Africa beat Senegal 2-1, will be replayed in November following referee Joseph Lamptey's ban for match manipulation.

Thursday September 7

ENGLAND: Premier League clubs vote to close next summer's transfer window before the season starts. Clubs will still be able to sell players until the end of the window in Europe.
NIGERIA: Ifeanyi Ubah have nine players banned for 12 games each after they attacked match officials during their top-flight game against Niger Tornadoes in August.

Friday September 8

FRANCE: Kylian Mbappe scores on his debut for Paris Saint-Germain as they thrash Metz 5-1.
PORTUGAL: Bas Dost's 97th-minute penalty gives Sporting a 3-2 win at Feirense to maintain their 100 per cent league record this season.

Saturday September 9

ENGLAND: Manchester City beat Liverpool 5-0 to equal the heaviest defeat of Jurgen Klopp's career as a manager.
GERMANY: Thomas Muller makes his 400th appearance for Bayern Munich but they lose in the Bundesliga for the first time since

Going through...Belgium's Kevin De Bruyne takes on Greece

April, going down 2-0 away to Hoffenheim.
NIGERIA: Plateau United beat Rangers 2-0 and are crowned Nigerian Professional Football League champions for the first time, with MFM finishing second and Enyimba in third. Shooting Stars, ABS, Gombe United and Remo Stars are relegated.
SPAIN: Lionel Messi scores his 38th hat-trick for Barcelona as they beat Espanyol 5-0 in the Catalan derby.

Sunday September 10

GERMANY: Bibiana Steinhaus becomes the Bundesliga's first female referee as she takes charge of Hertha Berlin's 1-1 draw against Werder Bremen.
ITALY: Ciro Immobile scores a hat-trick as Lazio beat Milan 4-1 in a game that is delayed by an hour after flash floods in Rome.
USA: Atlanta United christen their new Mercedes-Benz Stadium ➤

Treble...Ciro Immobile

Sint Maarten

STEVE MENARY

Hurricane Irma devastates island

Hopes of a footballing re-birth are put on hold

With Dutch troops on the lawless streets of Sint Maarten's capital Philipsburg after the devastation caused by Hurricane Irma, football is an afterthought. The new league was due to kick off in October, and would have been only the second to start since 2011, but that seems highly unlikely now.

Yet before the hurricane struck, football on the Caribbean Island had made massive strides.

"When I came four years ago there was no league, but there was indoor soccer," says Raymond Wolff, who arrived from Holland to teach.

With no outdoor game, Wolff signed up for the RISC Takers futsal side, which kept the game alive on Sint Maarten after an XI-a-side league first staged in 1979 fell apart.

The Sint Maarten Soccer Association (SMSA) was part of the Netherlands Antilles but joined the Caribbean Football Union independently and was made a CONCACAF associate member in 2002.

When the Antilles was wound up on a sporting and political level in 2010, a FIFA working party looking at new members visited Sint Maarten. There was then no further contact from FIFA until April 2013, when Sint Maarten was surprisingly made a full CONCACAF member, along with French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Saint Martin.

The four French territories had varying credentials and all were far superior to Sint Maarten, where a league had not been in place since 2011.

Frustrated at the XI-a-side game's inactivity, Sudesh "Johnny" Singh – a former player, coach and referee – joined up with RISC Takers coach Sandro Garcia to start a national futsal side.

In January 2016, Singh and Garcia took a Sint Maarten futsal side to Cuba for a tournament where they surpassed expectations, scoring six goals in three games and beating Jamaica 3-2.

Despite talk of entering the 2012 Caribbean Cup qualifiers, the national team had not played an official full international since losing 3-1 to Dominica in 2000, but Singh has changed all that as well.

In March 2016, Sint Maarten played Anguilla in a friendly and won 2-0 before travelling to Grenada for the first round of qualifiers in the 2017 Caribbean Cup. Given the years of inactivity, two defeats – 5-0 to Grenada and 2-1 to the US Virgin Islands – were no disgrace.

However, normal life may need to resume in Sint Maarten before football can return to the island. Having rebuilt the game once, Singh and the SMSA must do the job once again, but funding is likely to remain difficult.

Speaking before the hurricane, Singh said: "We took part in almost all of the CONCACAF and CFU tournaments, but there is minimal to zero financial injection from government."

Before the hurricane, the SMSA was planning a bid for membership of FIFA, which under new president Gianni Infantino now offers all members $5million every four years.

There can surely be few places in such desperate need of that money now as Sint Maarten. WS

Competition...Sint Maarten side Flames United (in yellow) take on San Juan Jabloteh of Trinidad & Tobago in this year's CFU Club Championship

➤ with a 3-0 victory over Dallas in front of a sell-out crowd of 45,314.

Monday September 11

CHINA: Uruguayan coach Gus Poyet quits Shanghai Shenhua with the team sitting 12th in the 16-team Chinese Super League.
ENGLAND: Crystal Palace sack manager Frank De Boer the day after a 1-0 defeat at Burnley sees them become the first English top-flight team since 1924 to lose their opening four league games without scoring a goal.
SAUDI ARABIA: After a goalless first leg, Carlos Eduardo scores a hat-trick in the return as Al Hilal beat Al Ain of the UAE 3-0 to reach the AFC Champions League semi-finals.

Tuesday September 12

CHINA: Leading 4-0 from the home leg of their AFC Champions League quarter-final, Shanghai SIPG lose 4-0 at Guangzhou Evergrande, have two players sent off in extra-time and then draw 5-5 on aggregate before winning on penalties.
ENGLAND: Roy Hodgson is named Crystal Palace's new manager on a two-year deal and, at 70, becomes the Premier League's oldest boss.
SCOTLAND: Celtic suffer their biggest home defeat in Europe, losing 5-0 to Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League.
UKRAINE: Mariupol are awarded the points after Dynamo Kiev refused to travel to the eastern port city to fulfil their away fixture on August 25 due to safety fears.

Wednesday September 13

JAPAN: Urawa Red Diamonds come back from a 3-1 first-leg defeat to beat Kawasaki Frontale 5-4 on aggregate in the AFC Champions League.
PORTUGAL: Porto goalkeeper Iker Casillas equals former Manchester United winger Ryan Giggs' record of playing in 19 different Champions League campaigns as his side lose 3-1 at home to Besiktas.
SPAIN: Real Madrid set a new record for a home win in the UEFA Youth League with a 10-0 victory over APOEL of Cyprus.
USA: Atlanta United equal the MLS record for the largest margin of victory with a 7-0 thrashing of New England Revolution.

Thursday September 14

SAUDI ARABIA: Nine days after sealing qualification for next summer's World Cup in Russia, ➤

Australia

SIMON HILL

A-League's maturity brings problems

Season kick-off clashes with vital World Cup play-off

Gaining traction in a crowded – and occasionally hostile – sporting market is not easy for Australia's A-League. And as the young competition hits its teenage years, the landscape has been further complicated by some self-inflicted wounds.

The ongoing row over the make-up of the Football Federation Australia (FFA) congress is threatening to drag on until late November, with representatives from FIFA and the AFC having arrived and left without being able to broker a compromise between the warring factions. A-League club owners and the FFA are at loggerheads over how many seats the former should have in a newly expanded assembly, along with conflicting views on the distribution of money from a recently signed TV deal that is worth $346million over six years.

In addition, the national team, which has so often been a unifying force, somehow stumbled out of the

Team-mates... new Sydney recruit Luke Wilkshire (left) and Bobo

automatic World Cup qualifying spots and has to go through the play-offs in a bid to make the finals in Russia. Unfortunately for the domestic game, the hugely important two-legged game against Syria begins on the A-League's opening weekend.

However, leaving aside all those distractions, the 10-team competition should be as competitive as ever, even if the big city clubs are once again expected to be the front runners.

Reigning champions Sydney have done well to avoid the annual cherry-picking of successful teams by richer overseas clubs. Only goalkeeper Danny Vukovic has departed by choice, joining Belgian side Genk, but coach Graham Arnold has a handy replacement in former Leyton Orient stopper Alex Cisak. Arnold has also added former Socceroo full-back Luke Wilkshire and Polish international midfielder Adrian Mierzejewski, while retaining Brazilian striker Bobo and Milos Ninkovic, who won the Johnny Warren Medal last season as the league's best player.

Potential...Victory boss Kevin Muscat (left) with new boy Mark Milligan

Beaten in the Grand Final, Melbourne Victory will be expected to push Sydney all the way. Kevin Muscat has brought home current Socceroo midfielder Mark Milligan and re-signed winger Kosta Barbarouses to replace Marco Rojas, who left for Heerenveen in Holland.

After plenty of wrangling, Victory also held onto current international midfielder James Troisi, and with promising 20-year-old defender Thomas Deng back from a loan spell at PSV and Rhys Williams arriving from Perth Glory, Muscat's team have the potential to go one better this time around.

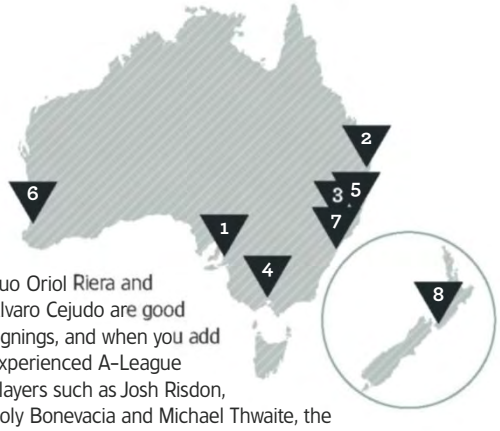
Western Sydney Wanderers had their annual mass turnover, with 14 players departing and 10 coming the other way at the last count. Spanish duo Oriol Riera and Alvaro Cejudo are good signings, and when you add experienced A-League players such as Josh Risdon, Roly Bonevacia and Michael Thwaite, the returning Mark Bridge and fringe Socceroo midfielder Chris Herd, coach Tony Popovic has everything in place to challenge for a fourth Grand Final.

KEY DATES

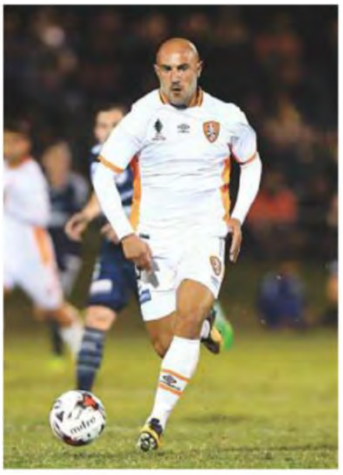
Regular season starts October 6, 2017
Regular season ends April 15, 2018
Finals series starts April 20, 2018
Grand Final May 5, 2018

A-LEAGUE: 2017-18

1 Adelaide United
2 Brisbane Roar
3 Central Coast Mariners *(Gosford)*
4 Melbourne City
Melbourne Victory
5 Newcastle Jets
6 Perth Glory
7 Sydney
Western Sydney Wanderers
8 Wellington Phoenix *(NZ)*



Melbourne City have a new boss in former Wigan Athletic manager Warren Joyce and last year's FFA Cup winners have added experience in Eugene Galekovic, Marcelo Carrusca, Iacopo La Rocca and Stefan Mauk, who were all part of Adelaide United's championship-winning outfit in 2016.



Recognisable... Massimo Maccarone

Adelaide themselves are also under new management in the shape of German coach Marco Kurz, who replaces the outgoing Gui Amor. Kurz has been quiet in the transfer market, but the addition of midfielders Johan Absalonsen and Karim Matmour, plus defender Ersan Gulum, should freshen things up. Much will depend, however, on the goals of Baba Diawara, who showed promise after arriving last season and will benefit from a full pre-season.

Brisbane Roar have attracted criticism for a squad that includes a number of older stars, leading to the inevitable "Dad's Army" nickname, but in ex-Middlesbrough and Empoli striker Massimo Maccarone they recruited the most recognisable foreign name during the close season.

Perth Glory remain the only Australian club yet to win a trophy in the A-League era and whether that will change this term depends upon their ability to tighten up a very leaky defence. With that in mind, Jacob Poscoliero and Scott Neville have been brought in, and the acquisition of Spanish midfielders Andreu and Xavi Torres should help to provide a more solid base.

Of the rest, Wellington Phoenix and Newcastle Jets both have new coaches, Darije Kalezic and two-time title winner Ernie Merrick respectively, and both will look to rebuild, while Central Coast Mariners are hoping to continue their incremental progress under Paul Okon, who has signed one-time Perth golden boy Daniel De Silva, and Dutchmen Tom Hiariej from Groningen and Wout Brama from Utrecht. WS

➤ Saudi Arabia replace coach Bert Van Marwijk with Edgardo Bauza.

Friday September 15

GERMANY: Hanover top the table for the first time in 48 years with a 2-0 victory over Hamburg.

Saturday September 16

CHINA: Shanghai SIPG thrash city rivals Shanghai Shenhua 6-1.
GERMANY: Robert Lewandowski scores twice in his 100th league game for Bayern Munich, in a 4-0 victory over Mainz, which takes him to a total of 82 top-flight goals for the team – a Bundesliga record for a player reaching a century of league appearances for one club.
SPAIN: Record signing Ousmane Dembele suffers a hamstring injury on his Liga debut as Barcelona beat Getafe 2-1 and is expected to be sidelined for four months. Antoine Griezmann scores as Atletico Madrid beat Malaga 1-0 in their first game at the Wanda Metropolitano.
USA: A new MLS record crowd of 70,425 watches Atlanta United draw 3-3 with Orlando City.

Sunday September 17

CZECH REPUBLIC: Slavia Prague beat Sparta Prague 2-0 to win the 288th derby.
ENGLAND: Wayne Rooney suffers a 4-0 loss on his return to Manchester United with Everton.
GERMANY: Beaten 5-0 at Borussia Dortmund, Cologne have now lost their first four league games, scoring just one goal and conceding 12, which is the worst start to a Bundesliga campaign since the 1962-63 season.
HOLLAND: Feyenoord's 100 per cent start to the Eredivisie season ends with a 1-0 defeat at PSV.
ITALY: Playing his 100th game for Juventus, Paulo Dybala gets a hat-trick in a 3-1 win at Sassuolo. Dries Mertens also scores three as Napoli beat Benevento 6-0. Genoa's 16-year-old striker Pietro Pellegri becomes the youngest player to score twice in a Serie A game as his side lose 3-2 to Lazio.
PARAGUAY: Club Atletico 3 de February and Deportivo Santani are promoted to the Primera Division.

Monday September 18

BELGIUM: Anderlecht sack coach Rene Weiler after just two wins in seven league games leaves the defending Belgian champions ninth in the table.
GERMANY: Wolfsburg dismiss Andries Jonker after Saturday's 1-0 Bundesliga defeat to Stuttgart and ➤

India

JOHN DUERDEN

ISL grows as merger gets closer

AFC and FIFA push for single national league

When the fourth season of the Indian Super League (ISL) kicks off in November it will herald the start of a transition from glitzy showpiece to traditional league set-up. Having expanded from eight to 10 teams, the ISL will now run for a full five months, rather than the previous 10 weeks, and it is no longer viewed as just an exciting sideshow to the country's traditional top tier I-League.

With the Asian Football Confederation and FIFA wanting to see just one national league, a merger between the two has been talked about for some time and a new proposal will be put forward in November that could see an 18-team league set up in the near future.

But whatever the make-up of any future Indian top-flight league, it will most definitely be run along the lines of the ISL.

The fledgling competition has already developed a glamorous brand image based on high-profile owners, big-name signings and famous coaches. While the I-League struggles with crowds under 5,000, attendances for ISL games have averaged over 20,000, with games televised nationally and the media taking a keen interest. The organisers will watch with interest over the coming months to see if the extended campaign has any detrimental effect on crowds and viewing figures.

With the longer season in mind, and the increased costs that go with it, many teams have opted not to sign a marquee player for the new season. They are also limited to signing eight foreign players and must field six locals.

There has been a distinct Spanish flavour to the competition in the past, with Atletico De Kolkata winning two of the three tournaments so far. However, with the club's part-owners Atletico Madrid selling their 25 per cent share during the summer, the defending champions have been re-named ATK and gone for a more English approach.

In what was the most intriguing appointment of the close season, Teddy Sheringham was brought in as coach of ATK. A Champions League winner with Manchester United in 1999, this is the 51-year-old's first managerial job since he left English fourth-tier side Stevenage last year. But perhaps ATK's smartest move was to bring in former United trainee Ashley Westwood as his assistant. Westwood was in charge of Bengaluru when they won the I-League in 2014 and 2016, and his knowledge of local players and the domestic scene will serve the club well. Leading the way on the pitch will be former Republic of Ireland striker Robbie Keane and ex-Bolton Wanderers keeper Jussi Jaaskelainen.

In addition to Sheringham, there are two other English coaches in the ISL this term, with former Aston Villa boss John Gregory starting a new challenge with Chennaiyin while Steve Coppell swaps Kerala Blasters for newcomers Jamshedpur.

In terms of players, the most eye-catching arrival comes in the deep south. Kerala are the only team to win the title who are not from Kolkata and they often attract crowds of over 50,000. Now that Dimitar Berbatov is in their ranks there may even be a few more turning up. The Bulgarian is joined by former team-mate Wes Brown, and just to reinforce the

Support...Kerala Blasters have attracted crowds of over 50,000

Manchester United connection, the team are coached by Rene Meulensteen, who worked under Alex Ferguson at Old Trafford.

Of the two new teams, much of the attention will be on Bengaluru, who have migrated from the I-League. East Bengal and Mohun Bagan, the historic giants of Indian football, were also in talks about switching to the ISL but could not agree a deal in time for this season. At some point they will have to be accommodated.

A successful 2017-18 campaign is crucial for the ISL. With a lack of famous names compared to previous seasons, if attendances and media profiles come close to the levels of previous years it will be very encouraging indeed. WS

New start...incoming Chenniayin coach John Gregory with team owner and Bollywood actor Abhishek Bachchan (right) and co-owner Vinita Dani (left)

INDIA: ISL 2017-18

1 Atlético de Kolkata
2 Bengaluru *(Bangalore)*
3 Chennaiyin *(Chennai)*
4 Delhi Dynamos
5 Goa
6 Jamshedpur
7 Kerala Blasters
8 Mumbai City
9 NorthEast United *(Assam)*
10 Pune City

➤ appoint Martin Schmidt as coach.
TAJIKISTAN: Istiklol beat Panjshir 5-0 to claim a fourth successive Tajik league title.

Tuesday September 19

JORDAN: Al Wehdat win the Jordan FA Shield for a record-extending ninth time with a 2-0 victory over Al Jazeera in the Final.
SPAIN: Lionel Messi scores four times as Barcelona thrash Eibar 6-1, while Simone Zaza grabs a nine-minute hat-trick as Valencia beat Malaga 5-0.

Wednesday September 20

ITALY: Napoli come from behind to win 4-1 at Lazio, while Juventus beat Fiorentina 1-0. Roma's 4-0 victory at Benevento is their ninth in a row on the road in Serie A.
RUSSIA: Without a representative on the FIFA Council since Vitaly Mutko was barred from standing for re-election in May, Russia's Alexei Sorokin is elected as one of the panel's European members at an extraordinary UEFA Congress.
SAN MARINO: Tre Penne beat La Fiorita 4-0 in the Super Cup.
SPAIN: Real Madrid lose 1-0 at home to Real Betis and fail to break the record for scoring in consecutive games, a mark of 73 which they now share with Santos.
USA: Sporting Kansas City win their third US Open Cup in six years, beating New York Red Bulls 2-1.

Thursday September 21

SPAIN: Atletico Madrid announce they have agreed a deal for Chelsea striker Diego Costa, even though he is not eligible to play until January.

Friday September 22

FRANCE: Radamel Falcao scores twice to make it 11 goals in seven Ligue 1 games for the Colombian as Monaco win 4-0 away to Lille.
GERMANY: Bayern Munich blow a two-goal lead and are held 2-2 at home by Wolfsburg.

Saturday September 23

ENGLAND: Premier League leaders Manchester City beat Crystal Palace 5-0 to stay ahead of arch-rivals Manchester United, 1-0 winners at Southampton, on goal difference. Third-placed Chelsea win 4-0 at Stoke.
FRANCE: Without the injured Neymar, Paris Saint-Germain drop league points for the first time this season in a goalless draw at Montpellier.
GERMANY: Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang grabs a hat-trick ➤

Libertadores Cup

TIM VICKERY

Barcelona make the last four

Ecuadorian side end Santos' dream

The newly extended, year-long Libertadores Cup opened up more space for teams from Brazil and Argentina, and – purely by coincidence of course – the 2017 competition ended up placing the last three representatives of each in separate halves of the knockout draw.

One half contained three Argentinian sides plus Jorge Wilstermann of Bolivia, while the other had three Brazilians and Barcelona of Ecuador – and the story of the two quarter-final outsiders ended very differently.

Wilstermann were this year's big surprise and had progressed by following a set pattern: winning their home games, where the altitude of Cochabamba, though not extreme, gives them an advantage, and then defending doggedly in their away ties.

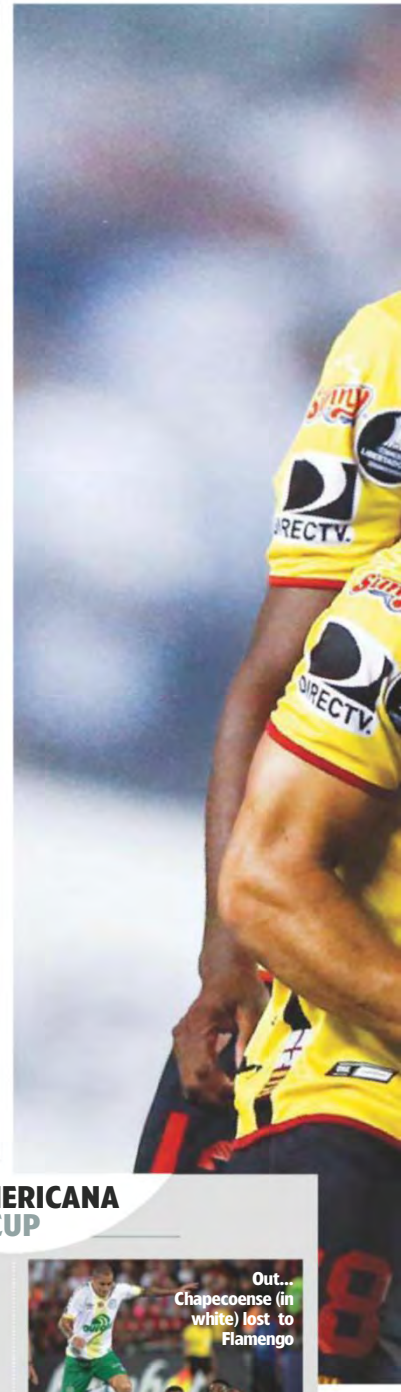
The first part of that script worked to perfection against a River Plate side that had previously won all of their away fixtures. With several key players sold, the visitors lacked cohesion and were soundly beaten 3-0 in Bolivia. Wilstermann hit them quickly, with early pressure forcing a goal from a corner, and then sat back, breaking when it suited them.

In the previous round the Bolivians had successfully defended a single-goal lead against Brazil's Atletico Mineiro, so surely three goals would be enough this time?

The answer, emphatically, was no. It was not even close.

River coach Marcelo Gallardo cleverly switched to a bold 3-4-2-1 set-up, and centre-forward Ignacio Scocco, who had been wasteful in the first leg, could now do no wrong. He scored a hat-trick in the first 20 minutes as River went on to win 8-0, with Scocco getting five, newly acquired midfielder Enzo Perez scoring twice and the excellent Ignacio Fernandez grabbing the other.

In the semi-finals, River now meet



Impressive... Matias Oyola of Barcelona

SUDAMERICANA CUP

Declared winners of last year's Sudamericana Cup after that tragic air crash on their way to the Final, Chapecoense's defence of their title ended meekly.

They failed to reach the quarter-finals after an emphatic 4-0 loss to fellow Brazilian side Flamengo, who now meet local rivals Fluminense, who needed a late away goal to creep past LDU of Ecuador and gain revenge after losing the Final of the 2008 Libertadores and the 2009 Sudamericana to the same opposition.

Their half of the draw is completed by another Brazilian team, Sport of Recife, who produced the latest in a string of backs-to-the-wall performances to see off compatriots Ponte Preta. Their next opponents are Junior of Colombia, who showed their extensive attacking resources in a 3-1 second-leg win over Cerro Porteno of Paraguay.

Out... Chapecoense (in white) lost to Flamengo

There was Paraguayan success over Colombia elsewhere as Libertad saw off Santa Fe 2-1 on aggregate, while compatriots Nacional did wonderfully well to beat Estudiantes of Argentina both home and away.

Both Paraguayan sides now face Argentinian opposition. Nacional will play Independiente, who put an end to a lively first year's international competition for compatriots Atletico Tucuman, while Libertad are up against Racing, who produced two disciplined displays to eliminate Brazilian league leaders Corinthians.

On fire...River's Ignacio Scocco gets the first of his five goals

Lanus, who beat San Lorenzo on penalties.

Twice in the group phase San Lorenzo had been minutes, or even seconds, away from elimination, and then they needed a shoot-out to get past Emelec of Ecuador. As a result, some thought that perhaps their name was on the trophy. And it seemed like that in the first leg against Lanus, where they won 2-0 with the aid of a fortunate penalty.

But, like Wilstermann, San Lorenzo saw their lead evaporate quickly in the return as Jorge Almiron's side hit their stride to level on aggregate. Both sides hit the woodwork but while the action remained intense the chances dwindled all the way to the final whistle and the shoot-out, where Lanus keeper Esteban Andrada excelled, sending his team through to their first Libertadores semi-final.

But there will be no all-Brazilian showdown in the other semi – Barcelona made sure of that.

The club from Guayaquil have made a habit of achieving excellent results on Brazilian soil this year and they did so once more, ending the unbeaten home record of Santos.

After a 1-1 draw at home, Barcelona defended stoutly in the return, with keeper Maximo Banguero in fine form, and centre-backs Dario Aimar and Xavier Arreaga showing grit and class. Matias Oyola distributes well from midfield, they have a variety of quick players down the flanks, and Uruguayan livewire Jonathan Alvez is a dangerous centre-forward.

Their style is probably best suited to away games, and so it proved against Santos, who badly missed the creativity of midfielder Lucas Lima in the second leg. Over anxious, Santos were always second best and Barcelona won when Alvez headed home Erick Castillo's cross. Santos supporters rioted afterwards, enraged that their quest to become the first Brazilian club with four titles had been interrupted.

Barcelona have made a habit of achieving excellent results on Brazilian soil this year

Barcelona go on to face more Brazilian opposition, although in the first leg they will miss Alvez and Brazilian defensive midfielder Gabriel Marques, both of whom were sent off against Santos.

Their opponents, Gremio, came through two tight games against compatriots Botafogo, who enjoyed a fine campaign under impressive coach Jair Ventura. It was a clash of styles, with pragmatic and direct Botafogo operating happily within their limitations, against an eye-pleasing possession based Gremio.

In a goalless draw in Rio, Gremio midfielder Arthur, reminiscent of a young Andres Iniesta, took the wind out of Botafogo's sails. In front of their own fans in Porto Alegre, Gremio started badly but found more fluency after the break and were rewarded with the only goal of the 180 minutes when Paraguayan centre-forward Lucas Barrios headed in a free-kick at the far post.

Gremio ended nervously, a shadow of the side that were so enchanting in June and July. However, coach Renato Portaluppi will relish having over a month until the semi-finals to whip his team back in shape. WS

➤ as Borussia Dortmund crush Borussia Monchengladbach 6-1 to stay top of the Bundesliga.

ITALY: Juventus thrash Torino 4-0 in the Turin derby and remain joint-top in Serie A with Napoli, who win 3-2 at SPAL.

SCOTLAND: Celtic win 2-0 at Rangers in the Old Firm derby to take their run of unbeaten domestic games to 57.

SPAIN: Real Madrid win 2-1 at Alaves to equal the Spanish top-flight record of 12 consecutive wins on the road. Barcelona's 3-0 victory away to Catalan neighbours Girona makes it six wins out of six for them in La Liga as they remain top of the table.

TURKEY: Five players are sent off as Fenerbahce beat Besiktas 2-1 in an Istanbul derby that features two goals and three red cards in the final five minutes.

Sunday September 24

BELGIUM: Club Brugge win 2-1 at Sporting Charleroi and go four points clear as the top two meet.

EGYPT: Two people are jailed for life over the violence that led to a stampede before a game between Zamalek and ENPPI in Cairo, in 2015, in which 19 people died.

GREECE: League leaders AEK come from two goals down to win 3-2 at home to Olympiakos.

HOLLAND: PSV win 7-1 at Utrecht and return to the top of the league. Ajax lose 2-1 at home to Vitesse.

ITALY: Genoa have two players sent off in injury time as they lose 1-0 at Internazionale to Danilo D'Ambrosio's 87th-minute goal.

KENYA: CAF strips Kenya of the right to host next year's African Nations Championship after an inspection team reports that only one of the four venues is ready.

SOUTH AFRICA: African Champions League holders Mamelodi Sundowns go out in this year's quarter-finals, losing to Wydad of Morocco on penalties.

URUGUAY: All the day's fixtures are called off as the country's referees go on strike following attacks on two officials during an under-19 game between Platense and Basanez the previous day.

Monday September 25

ENGLAND: West Bromwich Albion lose 2-0 at Arsenal.

ITALY: Juventus say they will lodge an appeal after president Andrea Agnelli is banned for one year for his role in the club selling tickets to supporters allegedly linked with organised crime. WS

Internationals

2018 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

AFRICA section

● 5 finals places available

3rd round

Group A

Aug 31 - Conakry
Guinea 3 (N Keita 7, D Camara 23, Alkhali Bangoura 90+3)
Libya 2 (Sabbou 87, Zuway 88)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Ahmed Djama (Dji)
Guinea: N Yattara - Alseny Bangoura, S Conde, F Camara, Issiaga Sylla, O Balde (Sankhon 74), N Keita, S Diallo (Landel 74), Alkhali Bangoura, D Camara (S Camara 81), Kamano.
Libya: Nashnoush - Fetori, Abboud, S Al Warfali, Sabbou, Ahmed, Almoatasembellah (Al Gadi 64), Al Tarhouni, Al Lafi (Ghanudi 81), Al Tubal, Saltou (Zuway 68).

Sep1 - Rades
Tunisia 2 (Meriah pen 18, Chaalali 47)
DR Congo 1 (Bakambu 43)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Otogo-Castane (Gab)
Tunisia: A Mathlouthi - Bedoui, S Ben Youssef, Meriah, Maaloul, F Ben Youssef (Badri 68), Ben Amor, Chaalali, Sliti (Aouadhi 85), Msakni, Khenissi (Touzghar 90).
DR Congo: Matampi - Ikoko (Ngonda 69), Zakuani, Bompunga, Mpeko, Mubele (Afobe 61), Mbemba, Bokadi, Kabananga, Kakuta (Maghoma 83), Bakambu.

Sep 4 - Monastir, Tunisia
Libya 1 (Elhouni 36)
Guinea 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Coulibaly (IvC)
Libya: Nashnoush - Fetori, S Al Warfali, Abboud, Al Tarhouni, Ahmed, Al Gadi, Al Lafi (Almoatasembellah 70), Elhouni, Sabbou, Zuway (Ghanudi 90). *Sent off: Al Gadi 63.*
Guinea: N Yattara - Alseny Bangoura, F Camara, Conte, Issiaga Sylla, O Balde (Sankhon 71), N Keita, S Diallo, Alkhali Bangoura (S Soumah 54), D Camara (S Camara 83), Kamano.

Sep 5 - Kinshasa
DR Congo 2 (Mbemba 9, M'Poku 47)
Tunisia 2 (Moke Abro og 77, Badri 79)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Bennett (SAf)
DR Congo: Matampi - Mpeko, Bokadi, Moke Abro, Ngonda, Kakuta (Bolingi 82), Mbemba (Mulumba 59), Maghoma, Mubele (Akolo 67), M'Poku, Bakambu.
Tunisia: A Mathlouthi - Nagguez (Badri 46), Bedoui, S Ben Youssef, Maaloul, Meriah, Chaalali (Sliti 69), Sassi, Ben Amor, Msakni, Touzghar (F Ben Youssef 78).

WC QUALS – AFRICA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tunisia	4	3	1	0	7	3	10
DR Congo	4	2	1	1	9	5	7
Guinea	4	1	0	3	4	7	3
Libya	4	1	0	3	3	8	3

Remaining games
Oct 7: Guinea v Tunisia; Libya v DR Congo.
Nov 6: DR Congo v Guinea; Tunisia v Libya.

Group B

Sep1 - Uyo
Nigeria 4 (Ighalo 29, Mikel 42, Moses 55, Iheanacho 76)
Cameroon 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 31,500. **Ref:** Grisha (Egy)
Nigeria: Ezenwa - Shehu, Troost-Ekong, Balogun, Echiejile, Ndidi, Onazi, Moses (Musa 83), Mikel (Agu 68), Simon, Ighalo (Iheanacho 61).
Cameroon: Ondoa - Fai, Ngadeu, Teikeu, Leuko, Siani, Zambo Anguissa, Ngamaleu (Choupo-Moting 46; Djoum 59), Moukandjo, Bassogog (Olinga 85), Aboubakar.

Sep 2 - Lusaka
Zambia 3 (Mwila 6, 33, Mwepu 89)
Algeria 1 (Brahimi 54)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 60,000.
Ref: Martins de Carvalho (Ang)
Zambia: Mweene - Silwimba, Sunzu, Z Tembo, Kapumbu, A Mulenga (Ngonga 80), Mtonga, Lungu (Mwepu 58), Sakala, Mwila (Kabwe 70), Daka. *Sent off: Sakala 56.*
Algeria: M'Bolhi - Mandi, Hassani (Attal 46), Bensebaini (Saadi 81), Ghoulam, Soudani (Ghezzal 58), Bentaleb, Taider, Brahimi, Hanni, Slimani.

Sep 4 - Yaounde
Cameroon 1 (Aboubakar pen 75)
Nigeria 1 (Simon 30)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Gassama (Gam)
Cameroon: Ondoa - Fai, Banana, Teikeu, Leuko, Siani, Zambo Anguissa, Olinga (Ngamaleu 81), Djoum, Moukandjo (Bassogog 61), Nsame (Aboubakar 61).
Nigeria: Ezenwa - Shehu, Troost-Ekong, Balogun, Echiejile, Ndidi, Onazi (Etebo 87), Moses, Mikel (Agu 65), Simon, Ighalo (Iheanacho 80).

Sep 5 - Constantine
Algeria 0
Zambia 1 (Daka 67)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Keita (Mli)
Algeria: M'Bolhi (Salhi 24) - Attal (Ounas 50), Mandi, Bensebaini, Ghoulam, Taider, Mahrez, Benguit, Bentaleb, Brahimi (Slimani 73), Soudani.
Zambia: Mweene - Silwimba, Z Tembo, Sunzu, Kapumbu, Mbewe (Banda 90+6), Mwepu, Mtonga, A Mulenga, Daka (Malama 90), Shonga (Ngonga 60).

WC QUALS – AFRICA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria	4	3	1	0	10	3	10
Zambia	4	2	1	1	6	4	7
Cameroon	4	0	3	1	3	7	3
Algeria	4	0	1	3	3	8	1

Remaining games
Oct 7: Cameroon v Algeria; Nigeria v Zambia.
Nov 6: Algeria v Nigeria; Zambia v Cameroon.

Group C

Sep1 - Rabat
Morocco 6 (Ziyech pen 19, 61, Boutaib 27, Hakimi 72, Fajr 86, Mahi 88)
Mali 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 55,000. **Ref:** Alioum (Cam)
Morocco: El Kajoui - Dirar, Benatia, Saiss, Hakimi, El Ahmadi (Fajr 85), Boussoufa, Amrabat (Tannane 74), Belhanda, Ziyech, Boutaib (Mahi 81).
Mali: O Sissoko - H Traore, Konate, Wague, Dibassy, Bissouma (L Coulibaly 78), Y Sylla, Mamoutou N'Diaye, Kouame (Kone 64), Diaby (T Doumbia 66), Marega.
Sent off: Dibassy 57, Konate 67.

Sep 2 - Libreville
Gabon 0
Ivory Coast 3 (Gradel 53, Doumbia 77, 83)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 20,000.
Ref: Tessema Weyesa (Eth)
Gabon: Bitseki Moto - Palun, Appindangoye, Ecuele Manga, Obiang, Bouanga, Tandjigora, Lemina, Ameka Autchanga (Evouna 59), Boupendza (Assoumou Akue 86), Kanga (Mbingui 70).
Ivory Coast: Gbohouo - Aurier, Bailly, Kanon, Kessie, Gervinho, Traore, Seri (Sanogo 79), Gradel, Doumbia (Boli 89), Kalou (Assale 74).

Sep 5 - Bouake
Ivory Coast 1 (Cornet 58)
Gabon 2 (Meye 19, Lemina 29)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Diedhiou (Sen)
Ivory Coast: Gbohouo - Aurier, Bailly, Kanon, Kessie, Gervinho, Traore (Assale 72), Seri, Gradel (Boli 83), Doumbia, Kalou (Cornet 53).
Gabon: Bitseki Moto - Palun, Appindangoye, Ecuele Manga, Nzambe, Tandjigora, Lemina (Oto'o Zue 76), Bouanga (Wachter 46), Assoumou Akue, Ameka Autchanga, Meye (Evouna 87). *Sent off: Palun 45+3.*

Sep 5 - Bamako
Mali 0
Morocco 0
Ref: Nampiandraza (Mad)
Mali: D Diarra - H Traore, Wague, Mahamadou N'Diaye, Kone, Y Sylla, Bissouma, L Coulibaly (Niane 86), T Doumbia, M Doumbia (A Traore 68), Marega (K Coulibaly 60).
Morocco: El Kajoui - Dirar, Benatia, Saiss, Hakimi, El Ahmadi, Boussoufa, Amrabat (Carcela 82), Fajr (Ait Bennasser 65), Ziyech (Tannane 73), Boutaib.

WC QUALS – AFRICA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	4	2	1	1	7	3	7
Morocco	4	1	3	0	6	0	6
Gabon	4	1	2	1	2	4	5
Mali	4	0	2	2	1	9	2

Remaining games
Oct 6: Mali v Ivory Coast
Oct 7: Morocco v Gabon.
Nov 6: Gabon v Mali; Ivory Coast v Morocco.

Group D

Sep1 - Praia
Cape Verde Islands 2 (Nuno Rocha 33, pen 38)
South Africa 1 (Rantie 14)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Abid Charef (Alg)
Cape Verde Islands: Vozinha - Tiago Almeida, Ponck, Vally (Steven Pereira 17), Stopira, Nuno Rocha (Danilson 78), Marco Soares, Babanco, Totti (Platini 66), Julio Tavares, Ryan Mendes.
South Africa: Williams - Mphahlele, Mathoho, Hlatshwayo, Langerman, Zwane, Furman, Zungu (Mokotjo 61), Dolly, Manyama (Grobler 54), Rantie (Tau 79). *Sent off: Mathoho 68.*

Sep 2 - Dakar
Senegal 0
Burkina Faso 0
Att: 40,000. **Ref:** Bondo (Bot)
Senegal: K N'Diaye - Wague, Mbodj, K Koulibaly, Ciss, S Sane, Gueye, Sankhare (P A N'Diaye 74), S Mane, Sow (Kouyate 89), I Sarr (Keita 66). *Sent off: K Koulibaly 84.*
Burkina Faso: Koffi - Paro (Malo 35), Dayo, B Kone, Coulibaly, Toure, C Kabore, B Traore, Alain Traore, Bayala (Banhoro 79), Nakoulma (Bance 87).

Sep 5 - Ouagadougou
Burkina Faso 2 (B Traore 9, P S N'Diaye og 89)
Senegal 2 (I Sarr 27, S Mane 75)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Sikazwe (Zam)
Burkina Faso: Koffi - Malo (Diawara 87), Dayo, B Kone, Coulibaly, Toure, Sylla (Ouattara 46), B Traore, Alain Traore, Nakoulma, Bance (Bayala 73). *Sent off: Dayo 41.*
Senegal: K N'Diaye (P S N'Diaye 69) - Gassama (Wague 64), Mbodj, S Sane, Ciss, I Sarr, Kouyate, Gueye, S Mane, P A N'Diaye, Sow (Keita 77).

Sep 5 - Durban
South Africa 1 (Jali 89)
Cape Verde Islands 2 (Garry Rodrigues 52, 67)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 16,822. **Ref:** Udoh (Nga)
South Africa: Sandilands - Mphahlele, Gould, Hlatshwayo, Hlanti, Dolly, Furman, Kekana (Tau 78), Zwane (Manyama 57), Grobler (Jali 65), Rantie.
Cape Verde Islands: Vozinha - Tiago Almeida, Ponck, Steven Pereira, Stopira, Danilson, Marco Soares, Nuno Rocha, Ryan Mendes (Totti 85), Garry Rodrigues (Admar 90+4), Julio Tavares (Platini 78).

WC QUALS – AFRICA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Burkina Faso	4	1	3	0	5	3	6
Cape Verde Is	4	2	0	2	4	6	6
Senegal	3	1	2	0	4	2	5
South Africa	3	0	1	2	3	5	1

The tie between South Africa and Senegal – a 2-1 win for South Africa on Nov12, 2016 – will be replayed this November because the referee, Joseph Lamptey of Ghana, was judged to have 'manipulated' the match. The decision to restage the game is subject to appeal

Remaining games
Oct 7: Cape Verde Islands v Senegal; South Africa v Burkina Faso.
Nov 6: Burkina Faso v Cape Verde Islands; Senegal v South Africa.
TBC: South Africa v Senegal.

Group E

Aug 31 - Kampala
Uganda 1 (Okwi 51)
Egypt 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Lemghaifry (Mra)
Uganda: Onyango - Wadada, Juuko, Isinde, Walusimbi, Wasswa, Aucho, Okwi (Sserunkuma 88), Miya (Luwagga 75), Ochaya (Muleme 90+7), Nsibambi.
Egypt: El Hadary - A Fathy, Rabia, Hegazy, Abdel-Shafy, Elneny, Hamed (S Gomaa 73), M Salah, El Said, Trezeguet (Sobhi 46), Kahraba (Gamal 67).

Sep1 - Kumasi
Ghana 1 (Partey 86)
Congo 1 (Bifouma 18)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Essrayri (Tun)
Ghana: R Ofori - Attamah (Afful 46), J Mensah, Amartey, Schlupp, A Ayew (Poku 68), Partey, E Ofori, Atsu, Gyan (Agyepong 62), J Ayew.
Congo: Mouko - Baudry, Mayembo, Itoua, Badila, Ondama (N'Dinga 56), Gandze, Avounou, Bahamboula (Pambou 82), Bifouma, Dore (Tsoumou 71).

Sep 5 - Brazzaville
Congo 1 (Illoy-Ayyet 43)
Ghana 5 (Boakye 23, 85, Partey 26, 45+2, 69)
HT: 1-3. **Ref:** Jiyed (Mor)
Congo: Mouko - Dikamona (Kifoueti 34), Mayembo, Illoy-Ayyet (Oniangue 46), Badila, Ondama (Tchibota 59), Gandze, Avounou, Bahamboula, Bifouma, Dore.
Ghana: R Ofori - Afful, J Mensah, Amartey, Agbenyenu (Schlupp 68), Acquah, Atsu, Partey (Gyasi 77), E Ofori (Duncan 56), Agyepong, Boakye.

Sep 5 - Alexandria
Egypt 1 (M Salah 6)
Uganda 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Gomes (SAf)
Egypt: El Hadary - A Fathy, Rabia, Hegazy, Abdel-Shafy, Elneny, Hamed, M Salah, El Said (S Gomaa 88), Sobhi (Trezeguet 71), Gamal (Koka 77).
Uganda: Onyango - Wadada, Juuko, Isinde, Walusimbi, Wasswa, Aucho, Okwi (Sserunkuma 68), Miya, Ochaya (Luwagga 46), Nsibambi (Karisa 89).

WC QUALS – AFRICA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt	4	3	0	1	5	2	9
Uganda	4	2	1	1	2	1	7
Ghana	4	1	2	1	6	4	5
Congo	4	0	1	3	3	9	1

Remaining games
Oct 7: Uganda v Ghana.
Oct 8: Egypt v Congo.
Nov 6: Congo v Uganda; Ghana v Egypt.

● *The 5 group winners will qualify for the finals*

ASIA section

● 4.5 finals places available

3rd round

Group A

Aug 31 - Wuhan
China 1 (Gao Lin pen 85)
Uzbekistan 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 51,666. **Ref:** Perera (Sri)
China: Zeng Cheng - Deng Hanwen, Zhang Linpeng (Ren Hang 69), Feng Xiaoting, Li Xuepeng, Hao Junmin, Zheng Zhi, Zhang Xizhe (Xiao Zhi 46), Yu Hanchao (Zhao Xuri 46), Gao Lin, Wu Lei.
Uzbekistan: Nesterov - Tukhtakhodjaev, Krimets, Ismailov, Denisov, Bikmaev (Mirzaev 79), Shukurov, Akhmedov, Shomurodov, Sergeev (Haydarov 67), Djeparov (Geynrikh 86).

Aug 31 - Seoul
South Korea 0
Iran 0
Att: 60,000. **Ref:** Green (Aus)
South Korea: Kim Seung-gyu - Choi Chul-soon, Kim Min-jae (Kim Joo-young 84), Kim Young-gwon, Kim Jin-su, Jang Hyun-soo, Koo Ja-cheol, Lee Jae-sung (Kim Shin-wook 73), Kwon Chang-hoon, Son Heung-min, Hwang Hee-chan (Lee Dong-gook 89).
Iran: Beiranvand - Rezaeian, Pouraliganji, Ansari, Mohammadi, Hajsafi, Dejagah (Taremi 64), Ezatolahi, Jahanbakhsh, Ghoochannejhad (Karimi 54), Amiri (Cheshmi 77). *Sent off: Ezatolahi 52.*

Aug 31 - Krubong, Malaysia
Syria 3 (Khribin 7, 54, Al Mawas 90+5)
Qatar 1 (Assadalla 35)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 300. **Ref:** Al Qaysi (Irq)
Syria: Alma - Al Shbli, O Midani (Mido 45), Hadi Al Masri, Ajan, Al Mawas, Haj Mohamad, Z Midani, Khribin (Mardikian 89), Al Khatib (Jenyat 72), Al Somah.
Qatar: Al Sheeb - Pedro Miguel (Kheder 27; Almahdi Ali 68), Khoukhi, Yasser, Hassan, Assadalla, El Sayed, Boudiaf, Al Haidos, Akram Afif, Almoez Ali (Alaaeldin 72).

Sep 5 - Tehran
Iran 2 (Azmoun 45, 64)
Syria 2 (Haj Mohamad 13, Al Somah 90+3)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 62,165. **Ref:** Sato (Jap)
Iran: Beiranvand - Rezaeian, Pouraliganji, Ansari (Pourghaz 57), Mohammadi, Karimi (Cheshmi 46), Hajsafi, Jahanbakhsh (Amiri 76), Dejagah, Taremi, Azmoun.
Syria: Alma - Al Shbli, Al Salih, Hadi Al Masri, Ajan, Haj Mohamad, Z Midani (Mardikian 67), Al Khatib (Mido 60), Al Mawas (Kalfa 81), Khribin, Al Somah.

Sep 5 - Doha
Qatar 1 (Akram Afif 47)
China 2 (Xiao Zhi 74, Wu Lei 83)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,686. **Ref:** Al Kaf (Oma)
Qatar: Al Sheeb - Almahdi Ali (I Mohammad 86), Khoukhi, Yasser, Al Enezi (Hassan 90), El Sayed, Al Haidos, Assadalla (Abdulsalam 78), Boudiaf, Akram Afif, Almoez Ali.
China: Zeng Cheng - Zhang Linpeng, Feng Xiaoting, Ren Hang (Jiang Zhipeng 46), Li Xuepeng (Hao Junmin 65), Yu Hanchao, Zhao Xuri, Zheng Zhi, Zhang Xizhe (Wu Lei 56), Xiao Zhi, Gao Lin. *Sent off: Zheng Zhi 80.*

Sep 5 - Tashkent
Uzbekistan 0
South Korea 0
Att: 34,000. **Ref:** Bin Jahari (Sin)
Uzbekistan: Nesterov - Khashimov, Krimets, Ismailov, Denisov, Haydarov, Shukurov, Djeparov (Rashidov 52), Akhmedov, Shomurodov (Masharipov 86), Sergeev (Geynrikh 58).
South Korea: Kim Seung-gyu - Go Yo-han, Kim Min-jae, Kim Young-gwon, Kim Min-woo, Jang Hyun-soo (Koo Ja-cheol 44), Jung Woo-young, Lee Keun-ho (Lee Dong-gook 78), Kwon Chang-hoon (Yeom Ki-hun 64), Son Heung-min, Hwang Hee-chan.

WC QUALS – ASIA – 3RD RND: GP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran (QF)	10	6	4	0	10	2	22
Sth Korea (QF)	10	4	3	3	11	10	15
Syria (QPO)	10	3	4	3	9	8	13
Uzbekistan	10	4	1	5	6	7	13
China	10	3	3	4	8	10	12
Qatar	10	2	1	7	8	15	7

Group B

Aug 29 - Al Ain
United Arab Emirates 2 (Mabkhout 21, Khalil 60)
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al Abed pen 20)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,221. **Ref:** Kim Jong-hyeok (SKo)
UAE: Eisa - Fawsi, M Ahmed, Salem, Khamis, T Ahmed, Esmaeel, Mabkhout (S Saleh 63), Matar (Al Fardan 77), Barman (M Abdulrahman 71), Khalil. *Sent off: Khamis 90+2.*
Saudi Arabia: Al Maiouf - Al Shahrani, Osama Hawsawi, Omar Hawsawi, Al Harbi, Al Faraj, Al Khaibri (Al Shamrani 81), Al Shehri (Al Dawsari 71), Al Jassim, Al Abed (Al Muwallad 64), Al Sahlawi.

Aug 31 - Saitama
Japan 2 (Asano 41, Ideguchi 82)
Australia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 59,492. **Ref:** Faghani (Irn)
Japan: Kawashima - H Sakai, Yoshida, Shoji, Nagatomo, Yamaguchi, Hasebe, Ideguchi, Asano (Kubo 89), Osako (Okazaki 87), Inui (Haraguchi 75).
Australia: Ryan - Milligan, Sainsbury, Spiranovic, Irvine (Amini 86), Luongo, Leckie, Rogic (Cahill 70), Troisi (Juric 61), Smith, Kruse.

Aug 31 - Bangkok
Thailand 1 (Ibrahim og 63)
Iraq 2 (Meram 34, Abdul-Amir pen 85)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 22,604. **Ref:** Shukralla (Bhn)
Thailand: Sinthaweechai - Adison, Chalermpong, Pansa, Peerapat (Siroch 67), Mongkol (Tristan 55), Wattana, Thitipan, Theerathon, Teerasil, Chanathip (Supachok 84). *Sent off: Thitipan 72.*
Iraq: Gassid - Salem, Attwan, Ibrahim, Adnan, Abdul-Amir, Abdul-Zahra (Fayyadh 59), Ali (Abdul-Raheem 75), Kamel, Meram, A Hussein (Natiq 87).

Sep 5 - Melbourne
Australia 2 (Juric 69, Leckie 86)
Thailand 1 (Pokklaw 82)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 26,393. **Ref:** Liu (HK)
Australia: Ryan - Wright (Maclaren 71), Sainsbury, Degenek, Mooy, Milligan, Leckie, Rogic, Cahill (Kruse 57), Gersbach (Troisi 67), Juric.
Thailand: Sinthaweechai - Tristan (Mongkol 90+1), Adison, Chalermpong, Pansa, Peerapat, Sanrawat (Siroch 75), Pokklaw, Theerathon, Chanathip (Nurul 79), Teerasil.

Sep 5 - Amman, Jordan
Iraq 1 (A Hussein 29)
United Arab Emirates 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 2,185. **Ref:** Makhadmeh (Jor)
Iraq: Gassid - Salem, Ibrahim, Sulaka, Adnan, Abdul-Amir, Resan (Attwan 61), Ali, Kamel, Meram (Abdul-Zahra 71), A Hussein (Fayyadh 81).
UAE: Eisa - Fawzi (Hussain 13), M Ahmed, Salem, Abbas, T Ahmed, Barman (Al Attas 71), M Abdulrahman, Matar, Khalil, S Saleh (Al Khaddeim 63).

Sep 5 - Jeddah
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al Muwallad 63)
Japan 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 62,165. **Ref:** Kovalenko (Uzb)
Saudi Arabia: Al Maiouf - Al Shahrani, Osama Hawsawi (M Hawsawi 76), Omar Hawsawi, Al Harbi (Al Zori 86), Otayf, Al Shehri, Al Abed, Al Faraj, Al Jassim, Al Sahlawi (Al Muwallad 46).
Japan: Kawashima - H Sakai, Yoshida, Shoji, Nagatomo, Yamaguchi, Honda (Asano 46), Shibasaki (Kubo 80), Ideguchi, Haraguchi, Okazaki (Sugimoto 67).

WC QUALS – ASIA – 3RD RND: GP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan (QF)	10	6	2	2	17	7	20
S Arabia (QF)	10	6	1	3	17	10	19
Australia (QPO)	10	5	4	1	16	11	19
UAE	10	4	1	5	10	13	13
Iraq	10	3	2	5	11	12	11
Thailand	10	0	2	8	6	24	2

● *The top 2 in both groups have qualified for the finals; the 2 3rd-placed countries will meet in the Asia section play-off*

Asia section play-off

1st leg - Oct 5: Syria v Australia.
2nd leg - Oct 10: Australia v Syria.
● *The Asia section play-off winner will meet the 4th-placed CONCACAF country in a play-off for a place in the finals*

CONCACAF section

● 3.5 finals places available

5th round

Sep1 - Mexico City
Mexico 1 (Lozano 53)
Panama 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 37,845. **Ref:** Lopez (Gtm)
Mexico: Ochoa - Damm (Lozano 51), D Reyes, Ayala, Araujo, H Herrera, Guardado, J M Corona (Aquino 65), Gallardo, Vela (Montes 83), J Hernandez.
Panama: Calderon - Machado, Chen (Escobar 57), Baloy, Ovalle, Godoy, G Gomez, Cooper, Buitrago (G Torres 64), Davis (Quintero 29), Tejada.

Sep1 - Couva
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (J Jones pen 67)
Honduras 2 (A Lopez 7, Elis 16)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 5,002. **Ref:** Guerrero (Mex)
Trinidad & Tobago: Jan-Michael Williams - David (A Jones 46), Bateau, Cyrus, Villaroel, J Jones, Hyland, K George, Cato (N Lewis 78), Molino, Boatswain (Plaza 57). *Sent off: A Jones 57.*
Honduras: L Lopez - Crisanto, H Figueroa, M Figueroa, Izaguirre, Elis (Johnny Palacios 69), Mejia, A Lopez (O Garcia 79), Claros, Quioto, Lozano (Costly 46). *Sent off: Izaguirre 65.*

Sep1 - Harrison
United States 0
Costa Rica 2 (Urena 30, 82)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 26,500. **Ref:** Pitti (Pan)
United States: Howard - Zusi (Morris 85), Cameron, Ream, Villafana (Dempsey 65), Pulisic (Arriola 87), Nagbe, Bradley, F Johnson, Wood, Altidore.
Costa Rica: Navas - Gamboa (Salvatierra 72), Waston, Acosta, Calvo, Oviedo (Venegas 78), Bolanos (Umana 72), Guzman, Borges, B Ruiz, Urena.

Sep 5 - San Jose
Costa Rica 1 (Urena 83)
Mexico 1 (Gamboa og 42)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 34,420. **Ref:** Geiger (USA)
Costa Rica: Navas - Gamboa, Waston, Acosta, Calvo, Oviedo (Wallace 59), B Ruiz, Guzman (Colindres 75), Borges, Bolanos (Venegas 58), Urena.
Mexico: Ochoa - Alvarez, D Reyes, Pereira, Moreno, Gallardo, Guardado (J M Corona 63), J Dos Santos, G Dos Santos (Vela 72), Lozano, R Jimenez (Montes 79).

Sep 5 - San Pedro Sula
Honduras 1 (Quioto 27)
United States 1 (Wood 85)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 37,325. **Ref:** Aguilar (ESv)
Honduras: L Lopez - Beckeles, M Figueroa, H Figueroa, Alvarado, A Lopez (Costly 64), Claros, Mejia, Quioto (O Garcia 66), Elis, Lozano (Johnny Palacios 82).
Sent off: H Figueroa 90+3.
United States: Guzan - Zusi (Cameron 63), O Gonzalez, Besler, Beasley (Arriola 62), Bradley, Acosta, Pulisic, Dempsey, Nagbe (Wood 73), Morris.

Sep 5 - Panama City
Panama 3 (G Torres 39, C Mitchell og 57, Arroyo 85)
Trinidad & Tobago 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 17,500. **Ref:** Bejarano (CR)
Panama: Calderon - M A Murillo, Escobar, R Torres (Baloy 80), Ovalle, Quintero (Arroyo 71), Godoy, G Gomez (Cooper 82), Barcenas, G Torres, B Perez.
Trinidad & Tobago: Phillip - C Mitchell, Bateau, Abu Bakr, M Williams, N Lewis, Gonzales, K George (Hyland 51), Molino, J Jones (Cato 53), Plaza (Charles 77).

WC QUALS – CONCACAF – 5TH ROUND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mexico (QF)	8	5	3	0	11	3	18
Costa Rica	8	4	3	1	12	5	15
Panama	8	2	4	2	7	5	10
United States	8	2	3	3	12	11	9
Honduras	8	2	3	3	9	16	9
Trinidad & Tob	8	1	0	7	4	15	3

Remaining games
Oct 6: Costa Rica v Honduras; Mexico v Trinidad & Tobago; United States v Panama.
Oct 10: Honduras v Mexico; Panama v Costa Rica; Trinidad & Tobago v United States.

● *The top 3 will qualify for the finals; the 4th-placed country will meet the winner of the Asia section play-off in a play-off for a place in the finals*

EUROPE section

● 13 finals places available (excluding the place for hosts **Russia**, who qualify automatically)

Group A

Aug 31 - Sofia
Bulgaria 3 (Manolev 12, Kostadinov 33, Chochev 79)
Sweden 2 (Lustig 29, Berg 44)
HT: 2-2. **Att:** 12,121. **Ref:** Tagliavento (Ita)
Bulgaria: P Iliev - S Popov, Chorbadzhiyski, Bozhikov, Zanev, Manolev (Kraev 75), Slavchev, Kostadinov, Chochev, G Milanov (Nedelev 61), I Popov (Dimitrov 83).
Sweden: Olsen - Lustig, Lindelof, Granqvist, Augustinsson, Durmaz (Claesson 82), J Johansson (Armenteros 85), Ekdal (Sebastian Larsson 70), Forsberg, Berg, Toivonen.

Aug 31 - Paris
France 4 (Griezmann 14, Lemar 73, 88, Mbappe 90+1)
Holland 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 79,551. **Ref:** Rocchi (Ita)
France: Lloris - Sidibe, Koscielny, Umtiti, Kurzawa, Kante, Pogba, Coman (Lacazette 80), Griezmann (Fekir 89), Lemar, Giroud (Mbappe 75).
Holland: Cillessen - Fosu-Mensah, De Vrij, Hoedt, Blind, Wijnaldum, Strootman, Robben, Sneijder (Vilhena 46), Promes, Janssen (Van Persie 64). *Sent off: Strootman 62.*

Aug 31 - Luxembourg
Luxembourg 1 (Da Mota 60)
Belarus 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,752. **Ref:** Pisani (Mlt)
Luxembourg: Joubert - M Martins (Ostrowski 78), Jans, Philipps, Janisch, Rodrigues (Turpel 55), Skenderovic, Holter (V Thill 67), O Thill, Joachim, Da Mota.
Belarus: Chernik - Politevich (Savitskiy 46), Sivakov, Filipenko, Aliseiko, Dragun, Maevski (Saroka 77), Balanovich, Matveichyk, Gordeichuk (Polyakov 61), Laptev.

Sep 3 - Borisov
Belarus 0
Sweden 4 (Forsberg 18, Nyman 24, Berg 37, Granqvist pen 84)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 6,431. **Ref:** Stieler (Ger)
Belarus: Chernik - Filipenko, Sivakov, Sachivko, Burko, Korzun, Nekhaychik (Dragun 46), Balanovich (Savitskiy 61), Rios, Saroka, Signevich (Bykov 78).
Sweden: Olsen - Lustig, Lindelof, Granqvist, Augustinsson, Durmaz (Claesson 67), Sebastian Larsson, J Johansson (G Svensson 69), Forsberg, Nyman, Berg (Kiese Thelin 85).

Sep 3 - Toulouse
France 0
Luxembourg 0
Att: 31,177. **Ref:** Stavrev (Mac)
France: Lloris - Sidibe, Koscielny, Umtiti, Kurzawa, Mbappe (Coman 59), Pogba, Kante, Lemar, Giroud (Lacazette 59), Griezmann (Fekir 81).
Luxembourg: Joubert - Jans, Malget, Philipps, Janisch, O Thill, C Martins, Skenderovic, V Thill (Rodrigues 59), Da Mota (Sinani 59), Turpel (Holter 87).

Sep 3 - Amsterdam
Holland 3 (Propper 7, 80, Robben 67)
Bulgaria 1 (Kostadinov 69)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 47,079. **Ref:** Sidiropoulos (Gre)
Holland: Cillessen - Tete, De Vrij, Hoedt, Blind, Wijnaldum, Propper (Van Ginkel 86), Vilhena, Robben, Janssen, Promes.
Bulgaria: P Iliev - S Popov, Bozhikov, Terziev, Zanev, Zehirov (G Milanov 46), Chochev, Tsvetkov (Slavchev 24), Manolev (Galabinov 60), Kostadinov, I Popov.

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France	8	5	2	1	15	5	17
Sweden	8	5	1	2	18	7	16
Holland	8	4	1	3	16	11	13
Bulgaria	8	4	0	4	13	17	12
Luxembourg	8	1	2	5	7	17	5
Belarus	8	1	2	5	4	16	5

Remaining games
Oct 7: Belarus v Holland; Bulgaria v France; Sweden v Luxembourg.
Oct 10: France v Belarus; Holland v Sweden; Luxembourg v Bulgaria.

Group B

Aug 31 - Budapest
Hungary 3 (Kadar 6, Szalai 26, Dzsudzsak 68)
Latvia 1 (Freimanis 40)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 16,500. **Ref:** Aranovskyi (Ukr)
Hungary: Gulacsi - Bese, Guzmics, Kadar, Korhut, Patkai, A Nagy, R Varga (Lovrencsics 86), Stieber (Elek 74), Dzsudzsak, Szalai (Bode 66).
Latvia: Vanins - Kolesovs, Gorkss, Maksimenko, Freimanis, Indrans, Vardanjans, Kazacoks (A Visnakovs 72), Solovjovs, D Ikaunieks (Rakels 72), Sabala (Gutkovskis 86).

Aug 31 - Porto
Portugal 5 (Cristiano Ronaldo 3, pen 29, 65, William Carvalho 58, Nelson Oliveira 84)
Faroe Islands 1 (Baldvinsson 38)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 25,087. **Ref:** Jovanovic (Ser)
Portugal: Rui Patricio - Cedric, Pepe, Jose Fonte, Eliseu, Joao Mario (Quaresma 59), Joao Moutinho (Andre Gomes 72), William Carvalho, Bernardo Silva, Cristiano Ronaldo, Andre Silva (Nelson Oliveira 81).
Faroe Islands: G Nielsen - Naes, Gregersen, Faero, V Davidsen, Vatnhamar (Bartalsstovu 66), Jakobsen, Baldvinsson, Sorensen, R Joensen (Lokin 81), Edmundsson (P Johannesen 73).

World Service

Aug 31 - St Gallen
Switzerland 3 (Seferovic 43, 63, Lichtsteiner 67)
Andorra 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 13,600. **Ref:** Hansen (Nor)
Switzerland: Sommer - Lichtsteiner, Schar, Akanji, Rodriguez, Freuler, Xhaka (Zakaria 66), Shaqiri, Mehmedi (E Fernandes 73), Zuber (Derdiyok 46), Seferovic.
Andorra: Gomes - Jordi Rubio, Lima, Llovera, M Garcia, Clemente (E Garcia 82), Rebes, M Vieira, A Martinez (A Sanchez 76), Pujol (Moreno 90+1), Alaez.

Sep 3 - Torshavn
Faroe Islands 1 (Sorensen 31)
Andorra 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 4,357. **Ref:** Sant (Mlt)
Faroe Islands: G Nielsen - Naes, Faero, Gregersen, Baldvinsson, V Davidsen, Benjaminsen, R Joensen (Jakobsen 54), Vatnhamar, Sorensen (Bartalsstovu 90+1), Edmundsson (K Olsen 85).
Andorra: Gomes - Jordi Rubio (A Sanchez 69), Lima, Llovera, Jesus Rubio, E Garcia (Gomez 77), Rebes, M Vieira, San Nicolas, Pujol, A Martinez (Riera 88).

Sep 3 - Budapest
Hungary 0
Portugal 1 (Andre Silva 48)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 21,800. **Ref:** Makkelie (Hol)
Hungary: Gulacsi - Fiola, Guzmics, Kadar, Korhut, Lovrencsics (R Varga 78), Patkai, Elek (Pinter 67), Dzsudzsak, Priskin, Eppel (Bode 61). *Sent off: Priskin 30.*
Portugal: Rui Patricio - Cedric, Bruno Alves, Pepe, Fabio Coentrao (Eliseu 28), Gelson Martins (Bernardo Silva 63), Danilo Pereira, Joao Mario, Joao Moutinho, Cristiano Ronaldo, Andre Silva (Quaresma 86).

Sep 3 - Riga
Latvia 0
Switzerland 3 (Seferovic 9, Dzemaili 55, Rodriguez pen 58)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 7,587. **Ref:** Gozubuyuk (Hol)
Latvia: Vanins - Solovjovs, Kolesovs, Gorkss, Dubra, Maksimenko, Vardanjans (Kazacoks 78), O Laizans, Indrans (Kluskins 62), Sabala, Rakels (D Ikaunieks 68).
Switzerland: Sommer - Lichtsteiner (Lang 80), Schar, Djourou, Rodriguez, Behrami, Dzemaili, Xhaka (Zakaria 77), Shaqiri, Seferovic (Derdiyok 76), Mehmedi.

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Switzerland	8	8	0	0	18	3	24
Portugal	8	7	0	1	28	4	21
Hungary	8	3	1	4	11	9	10
Faroe Islands	8	2	2	4	4	15	8
Andorra	8	1	1	6	2	17	4
Latvia	8	1	0	7	3	18	3

Remaining games
Oct 7: Andorra v Portugal; Faroe Islands v Latvia; Switzerland v Hungary.
Oct 10: Hungary v Faroe Islands; Latvia v Andorra; Portugal v Switzerland.

Group C

Sep1 - Prague
Czech Republic 1 (Darida 78)
Germany 2 (Werner 4, Hummels 88)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 18,093. **Ref:** Karasev (Rus)
Czech Republic: Vaclik - Gebre Selassie, Kalas, Suchy, Novak, Boril, Kopic (Krejci 53), Soucek, Darida, Jankto (Zmrhal 89), Krmencik (Kliment 76).
Germany: Ter Stegen - Kimmich, Hummels, Ginter, Brandt (Rudiger 61), Kroos, Hector, Muller, Stindl (Draxler 67), Ozil, Werner (Can 79).

Sep1 - Oslo
Norway 2 (King pen 32, R F Sadygov og 60)
Azerbaijan 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,599. **Ref:** Stefanski (Pol)
Norway: Jarstein - Svensson (Elabdellaoui 89), Nordtveit, Skjelvik, Aleesami, M Elyounoussi, Berge, Johansen, Daehli (Berget 81), King, Sorloth (T Elyounoussi 73).
Azerbaijan: K Agayev - Medvedev, R F Sadygov, B Huseynov, Pashayev, Alaskarov, J Huseynov, Garayev (Amirguliyev 81), Richard Almeida, Nazarov (Ismayilov 66), Madatov (Sheydaev 62). *Sent off: B Huseynov 90.*

Sep1 - Serravalle
San Marino 0
Northern Ireland 3 (Magennis 71, 75, Davis pen 78)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,544. **Ref:** Jorgji (Alb)
San Marino: A Simoncini - Bonini, Biordi (F Vitaioli 65), D Simoncini (A Gasperoni 76), Palazzi, Grandoni, F Berardi (A Golinucci 79), Cervellini, Battistini, Rinaldi, Bernardi.
Northern Ireland: McGovern - C McLaughlin, Hughes, J Evans, Brunt, Magennis, Norwood, Davis, Dallas (McGinn 78), Washington (C Evans 78), K Lafferty (Ferguson 60).

Sep 4 - Baku
Azerbaijan 5 (Ismayilov 20, 57, Abdullayev 25, Cevoli og 71, R F Sadygov 81)
San Marino 1 (Palazzi 74)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Dabanovic (Mne)
Azerbaijan: S Agayev - Mirzabekov, R F Sadygov, T Guliyev, Khalilzade, J Huseynov (Garayev 69), Amirguliyev, Richard Almeida, Ismayilov (Ramazanov 62), Sheydaev, Abdullayev (Dadashov 72).
San Marino: A Simoncini - Cesarini, Alessandro Della Valle, Cevoli, Palazzi, Grandoni, A Gasperoni (Hirsch 77), Cervellini (Tosi 27), A Golinucci, Tomassini, Rinaldi (Stefanelli 86).

Sep 4 - Stuttgart
Germany 6 (Ozil 10, Draxler 17, Werner 21, 40, Goretzka 50, Gomez 79)
Norway 0
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 53,814. **Ref:** Mazeika (Lit)
Germany: Ter Stegen - Kimmich, Rudiger, Hummels, Hector, Rudy (Khedira 60), Muller (Goretzka 46), Kroos, Ozil, Draxler, Werner (Gomez 66).
Norway: Jarstein - Elabdellaoui, Nordtveit, Skjelvik, Aleesami, M Elyounoussi (Svensson 58), Berge (Valsvik 46), Selnaes (Linnes 75), Daehli, King, Berget.

Sep 4 - Belfast
Northern Ireland 2 (J Evans 28, Brunt 41)
Czech Republic 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 18,167. **Ref:** Orsato (Ita)
Northern Ireland: McGovern - C McLaughlin, Hughes, J Evans, Brunt, Magennis (Ferguson 84), C Evans, Dallas (K Lafferty 74), Davis, Norwood, Washington (Hodson 58).
Czech Republic: Vaclik - Suchy, Kalas, Novak (Dockal 66), Gebre Selassie, Darida, Soucek, Boril, Jankto (Husbauer 55), Krmencik, Krejci (Kliment 55).

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	8	8	0	0	35	2	24
N Ireland	8	6	1	1	16	2	19
Azerbaijan	8	3	1	4	8	12	10
Czech Rep	8	2	3	3	10	9	9
Norway	8	2	1	5	8	16	7
San Marino	8	0	0	8	2	38	0

Remaining games
Oct 5: Azerbaijan v Czech Republic; Northern Ireland v Germany; San Marino v Norway.
Oct 8: Czech Republic v San Marino; Germany v Azerbaijan; Norway v Northern Ireland.

Group D

Sep 2 - Tbilisi
Georgia 1 (Kazaishvili 34)
Republic of Ireland 1 (Duffy 4)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 19,669. **Ref:** Kruzliak (Slk)
Georgia: Makaridze - Kakabadze, Kverkvelia, Kashia, Navalovski, Kvekveskiri, Gvilia, Jigauri (Chanturia 75), Ananidze, Kazaishvili (Khocholava 90+3), Kvilitaia (Merebashvili 85).
Republic of Ireland: Randolph - Christie, Duffy, Clark, Ward, Brady, Whelan (Murphy 79), Arter (McGeady 61), McClean, Walters, S Long.

Sep 2 - Belgrade
Serbia 3 (Gacinovic 20, Kolarov 30, A Mitrovic 81)
Moldova 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 9,974. **Ref:** Bognar (Hun)
Serbia: P Rajkovic - Ivanovic, Nikola Maksimovic, Nastasic, Gacinovic, Matic (Radoja 76), Gudelj, Kolarov, Kostic, A Mitrovic (Prijovic 81), Tadic (Ljajic 66).
Moldova: Cebanu - Cebotaru, Posmac, Epureanu, Armas, Dedov, Anton (Bugaiov 81), Ionita, Cojocari (Carp 75), Cociuc (A Antoniuc 59), Ginsari.

Sep 2 - Cardiff
Wales 1 (Woodburn 74)
Austria 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 32,633. **Ref:** Hategan (Rom)
Wales: Hennessey - Gunter, Chester, A Williams, B Davies, Richards (King 46), Ramsey, D Edwards, Lawrence (Woodburn 69), Bale, Vokes (Robson-Kanu 69).
Austria: Lindner - Lainer, Dragovic, Prodl (Danso 27), Hinteregger, Arnautovic, Baumgartlinger, Alaba, Ilsanker, Sabitzer (Gregoritsch 78), Harnik (Janko 81).

Sep 5 - Vienna
Austria 1 (Schaub 44)
Georgia 1 (Gvilia 8)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 13,400. **Ref:** Grinfeeld (Isr)
Austria: Lindner - Bauer, Dragovic, Danso, Hinteregger, Baumgartlinger, Grillitsch (Ilsanker 80), Kainz, Alaba (Schaub 38), Arnautovic, Harnik (Janko 68).
Georgia: Makaridze - Kakabadze, Kverkvelia, Kashia, Navalovski, Kazaishvili (Khocholava 90+2), Kankava, Kvekveskiri, Gvilia (Merebashvili 69), Ananidze, Kvilitaia (Dvalishvili 88).

Sep 5 - Chisinau
Moldova 0
Wales 2 (Robson-Kanu 80, Ramsey 90+3)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,272. **Ref:** Raczkowski (Pol)
Moldova: Cebanu - Bordian, Posmac, Epureanu, Rozgoniuc, Ionita (Bugaiov 85), Anton, Graur (Ambros 85), A Pascenco (Cojocari 70), Dedov, Ginsari.
Wales: Hennessey - Gunter, Chester, A Williams, B Davies, Allen, Ramsey, King (Vokes 67), Bale, Robson-Kanu (D Edwards 88), Lawrence (Woodburn 61).

Sep 5 - Dublin
Republic of Ireland 0
Serbia 1 (Kolarov 55)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 50,153. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)
Republic of Ireland: Randolph - Christie, Duffy, Clark, Ward (O'Dowda 72), Hoolahan (Murphy 62), Meyler (Hourihane 79), Brady, Walters, S Long, McClean.
Serbia: Stojkovic - Vukovic, Nikola Maksimovic, Ivanovic, Rukavina, Milivojevic, Matic, Kolarov, Kostic (S Mitrovic 72), A Mitrovic (Prijovic 80), Tadic (Gudelj 81). *Sent off: Nikola Maksimovic 68.*

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Serbia	8	5	3	0	17	7	18
Wales	8	3	5	0	12	5	14
Rep Ireland	8	3	4	1	9	6	13
Austria	8	2	3	3	10	10	9
Georgia	8	0	5	3	8	12	5
Moldova	8	0	2	6	4	20	2

Remaining games
Oct 6: Austria v Serbia; Georgia v Wales; Republic of Ireland v Moldova.
Oct 9: Moldova v Austria; Serbia v Georgia; Wales v Republic of Ireland.

Group E

Sep1 - Copenhagen
Denmark 4 (Delaney 16, Cornelius 42, N Jorgensen 59, Eriksen 80)
Poland 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 34,505. **Ref:** Mazic (Ser)
Denmark: Schmeichel - Dalsgaard, Kjaer, Bjelland, Larsen, Kvist, Delaney (Jensen 86), Cornelius (Bendtner 75), Eriksen, Sisto, N Jorgensen (Lerager 82).
Poland: Fabianski - Piszczek (Cionek 34), Glik, Pazdan, Jedrzejczyk, Blaszczykowski (Milik 62), Maczynski, Linetty (Makuszewski 67), Grosicki, Zielinski, Lewandowski.

Sep1 - Astana
Kazakhstan 0
Montenegro 3 (Vesovic 31, Beciraj 53, Simic 63)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 16,511. **Ref:** Delferiere (Blg)
Kazakhstan: Loria - Beisebekov, Logvinenko, Akhmetov, Shomko, Nurgaliyev (Turysbek 62), Zhukov (M Baizhanov 17), Kuat, Suyumbayev (Tagybergen 85), Muzhikov, Murtazayev.
Montenegro: Petkovic - Marusic, Savic, Simic, Tomasevic, N Vukcevic, Kosovic (Ivanic 54), Jankovic, Jovetic (Zverotic 72), Vesovic, Beciraj (Mugosa 84).

Sep1 - Bucharest
Romania 1 (Maxim 90+1)
Armenia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 27,178. **Ref:** Bebek (Cro)
Romania: Tatarusanu - Benzar, Chiriches, Tosca, Ganea, Stanciu, Pintilii, Chipciu (Popa 68), Baluta (Ivan 74), Stancu (Maxim 81), Andone.
Armenia: Meliksetyan - Hambartsumyan, Haroyan, T Voskanyan, Daghbashyan, G Malakyan (Artak Yedigaryan 46), K Hovhannisyan, Mkhitaryan, Pizzelli (Adamyan 74), Manoyan (Koryan 58), Barseghyan. *Sent off: T Voskanyan 54.*

Sep 4 - Yerevan
Armenia 1 (Koryan 6)
Denmark 4 (Delaney 17, 82, 90+3, Eriksen 29)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 6,800. **Ref:** Madden (Sco)
Armenia: Meliksetyan - K Hovhannisyan, Hambartsumyan, Haroyan, Andonian, Hayrapetyan (Daghbashyan 38), A Grigoryan, Mkhitaryan, Artak Yedigaryan, Adamyan (Barseghyan 58), Koryan (Ozbiliz 76).
Denmark: Schmeichel - Dalsgaard, Kjaer, Bjelland, Larsen, Kvist, Eriksen, Delaney, Cornelius (Schone 78), N Jorgensen, Sisto (Fischer 67).

Sep 4 - Podgorica
Montenegro 1 (Jovetic 75)
Romania 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 9,452. **Ref:** Thomson (Sco)
Montenegro: Petkovic - Marusic, Savic, Tomasevic, Stojkovic, Ivanic (Mugosa 70), N Vukcevic, Jankovic (Jovovic 84), Jovetic, Vesovic, Beciraj (Zverotic 90+2).
Romania: Tatarusanu - Benzar, Chiriches, Moti, Tosca, Gaman (Hanca 81), Marin (Stanciu 64), Chipciu, Stancu, Maxim, Andone (Baluta 64).

Sep 4 - Warsaw
Poland 3 (Milik 11, Glik 74, Lewandowski pen 86)
Kazakhstan 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 56,963. **Ref:** Treimanis (Lat)
Poland: Fabianski - Piszczek, Glik, Pazdan, Rybus, Makuszewski (Blaszczykowski 65), Maczynski (Bednarek 89), Zielinski, Grosicki (Teodorczyk 90), Milik, Lewandowski.
Kazakhstan: Loria - Suyumbayev, Logvinenko, Akhmetov, Dmitrenko, Shomko, Darabayev, Kuat, Beisebekov (Tagybergen 87), Khizhnichenko (Schetkin 68), Murtazayev.

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Poland	8	6	1	1	18	11	19
Montenegro	8	5	1	2	18	7	16
Denmark	8	5	1	2	18	7	16
Romania	8	2	3	3	8	8	9
Armenia	8	2	0	6	8	19	6
Kazakhstan	8	0	2	6	4	22	2

Remaining games
Oct 5: Armenia v Poland; Montenegro v Denmark; Romania v Kazakhstan.
Oct 8: Denmark v Romania; Kazakhstan v Armenia; Poland v Montenegro.

Group F

Sep1 - Vilnius
Lithuania 0
Scotland 3 (Armstrong 25, Robertson 30, McArthur 72)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 5,067. **Ref:** Del Cerro (Spa)
Lithuania: Setkus - Vaitkunas, Kijanskas, Freidgeimas, Borovskij, Zulpa (Spalvis 68), Kuklys, Cernych, Slivka (Verbickas 79), Novikovas, Sernas (Matulevicius 82).
Scotland: Gordon - Berra, Mulgrew, Robertson, Tierney, Brown, Phillips, Armstrong (McGinn 85), Forrest (Ritchie 66), Griffiths (C Martin 79), McArthur.

Sep1 - Valletta
Malta 0
England 4 (Kane 53, 90+2, Bertrand 86, Welbeck 90+1)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 16,994. **Ref:** Dias (Por)
Malta: Hogg - S Borg, Z Muscat, Agius, Magri, Zerafa (R Camilleri 75), S Pisani, Kristensen, R Fenech (P Fenech 83), J P Farrugia, Schembri (M Mifsud 86).
England: Hart - Walker, Jones, Cahill, Bertrand, Henderson, Sterling (Rashford 46), Alli (Vardy 69), Oxlade-Chamberlain (Welbeck 76), Livermore, Kane.

Sep1 - Trnava
Slovakia 1 (Mevlja og 81)
Slovenia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 16,896. **Ref:** Mateu Lahoz (Spa)
Slovakia: Dubravka - Pekarik, Gyomber, Skriniar, Hubocan, Mak, Kucka (Gregus 65), Lobotka, Hamsik (Duda 87), Weiss (Rusnak 55), Nemec.
Slovenia: Oblak - Skubic, Mevlja, Cesar, Jokic (Viler 9), Ilicic, Krhin (Rotman 80), Birsa (Verbic 60), Kurtic, Vetrih, Matavz.

Sep 4 - London
England 2 (Dier 37, Rashford 59)
Slovakia 1 (Lobotka 3)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 67,823. **Ref:** Turpin (Fra)
England: Hart - Walker, Jones, Cahill, Bertrand, Henderson, Dier, Oxlade-Chamberlain (Sterling 83), Alli (Livermore 90+3), Rashford (Welbeck 84), Kane.
Slovakia: Dubravka - Pekarik, Skrtel, Durica, Hubocan, Skriniar, Lobotka, Weiss (Rusnak 68), Hamsik (Duda 79), Mak, Nemec (Duris 69).

Sep 4 - Glasgow
Scotland 2 (Berra 9, Griffiths 49)
Malta 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 26,371. **Ref:** Kehlet (Den)
Scotland: Gordon - Berra, Mulgrew (Hanley 56), Robertson, Tierney, Brown, Phillips, Armstrong, Forrest, Griffiths (C Martin 70), McArthur (Morrison 46).
Malta: Hogg - Magri, Agius, Z Muscat, S Borg (A Muscat 86), R Fenech, Zerafa, Kristensen (P Fenech 85), S Pisani, Schembri (Gambin 71), Effiong.

Sep 4 - Ljubljana
Slovenia 4 (Ilicic pen 25, pen 61, Verbic 82, Birsa 90)
Lithuania 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 6,230. **Ref:** Kovacs (Rom)
Slovenia: Oblak - Skubic, Mevlja, Cesar, Viler, Kurtic, Rotman, Verbic, Repas (Vetrih 86), Ilicic (Matavz 85), Sporar (Birsa 63).
Lithuania: Setkus - Vaitkunas, L Klimavicius, Kijanskas (Girdvainis 79), Borovskij, Valskis (Spalvis 65), Slivka, Kuklys, Sernas (Verbickas 81), Novikovas, Cernych.

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England	8	6	2	0	16	3	20
Slovakia	8	5	0	3	14	6	15
Slovenia	8	4	2	2	10	4	14
Scotland	8	4	2	2	14	10	14
Lithuania	8	1	2	5	6	18	5
Malta	8	0	0	8	2	21	0

Remaining games
Oct 5: England v Slovenia; Malta v Lithuania; Scotland v Slovakia.
Oct 8: Lithuania v England; Slovakia v Malta; Slovenia v Scotland.

Group G

Sep 2 - Elbasan
Albania 2 (Roshi 54, Agolli 78)
Liechtenstein 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,500. **Ref:** Lapochkin (Rus)
Albania: Berisha - Hysaj, Mavraj, Ajeti, Agolli, Abrashi (Hyka 83), M Basha, Memushaj (Kukeli 77), Grezda (Ahmedi 86), Llullaku, Roshi.
Liechtenstein: Jehle - Quintans (Yildiz 79), Malin, Kaufmann, Goppel, Martin Buchel, Salanovic, N Hasler, Wieser, Burgmeier (Brandle 79), Frick (Erne 65).

Sep 2 - Haifa
Israel 0
Macedonia 1 (Pandev 73)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 11,350. **Ref:** Eskov (Rus)
Israel: Glazer - Bitton (Keltjens 71), Tal Ben Haim/D, Tzedek, Davidzada, Kabha, Ohana (Hemed 46), Cohen, Melikson, Zahavi, Tal Ben Haim/F (Einbinder 53).
Macedonia: Dimitrievski - Ristovski, Musliu, D Velkoski, Ristevski, Nikolov (Elmas 63), Spirovski, Pandev, Bardhi (Zajkov 90), Alioski, Nestorovski (Radeski 86).

Sep 2 - Madrid
Spain 3 (Isco 13, 40, Morata 77)
Italy 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 73,628. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)
Spain: De Gea - Carvajal, Sergio Ramos, Pique, Jordi Alba, Busquets, Koke, Silva, Iniesta (Morata 72), Marco Asensio (Saul 78), Isco (Villa 90).
Italy: Buffon - Darmian, Barzagli, Bonucci, Spinazzola, Candreva (Bernardeschi 70), De Rossi, Verratti, Insigne, Immobile (Gabbiadini 78), Belotti (Eder 70).

Sep 5 - Reggio Emilia
Italy 1 (Immobile 53)
Israel 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,507. **Ref:** Bastien (Fra)
Italy: Buffon - Conti (Zappacosta 49), Barzagli, Astori, Darmian, Candreva (Bernardeschi 87), De Rossi, Verratti (Montolivo 89), Insigne, Immobile, Belotti.
Israel: Harush - Davidzada, Tzedek, Tal Ben Haim/D, Keltjens, Melikson (Tal Ben Haim/F 62), Cohen (Einbinder 77), Natcho, Kabha, Refaelov, Shechter (Benayoun 69).

Sep 5 - Vaduz
Liechtenstein 0
Spain 8 (Sergio Ramos 3, Morata 15, 54, Isco 16, Silva 39, Iago Aspas 51, 63, Goppel og 89)
HT: 0-4. **Att:** 5,864. **Ref:** Stoyanov (Bul)
Liechtenstein: Jehle - Quintans (Yildiz 60), Kaufmann, Malin, Martin Buchel, Polverino (A Sele 78), Wieser, Salanovic, Goppel, Burgmeier (S Wolfinger 82), N Hasler.
Spain: De Gea - Pedro, Pique, Sergio Ramos (Nacho 46), Monreal, Thiago, Busquets, Iniesta, Isco (Deulofeu 56), Morata, Silva (Iago Aspas 46).

Sep 5 - Strumica
Macedonia 1 (Trajkovski pen 78)
Albania 1 (Roshi 53)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,493. **Ref:** Eriksson (Swe)
Macedonia: Dimitrievski - Ristovski, Musliu, D Velkoski, Ristevski (Trickovski 87), Spirovski (Radeski 87), Bardhi, Nikolov (Trajkovski 58), Pandev, Alioski, Nestorovski.
Albania: Berisha - Hysaj, Ajeti, Mavraj, Roshi, Lila, Kukeli (M Basha 46), Agolli (Memolla 73), Llullaku (Memushaj 46), Hyka, Sadiku.

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain	8	7	1	0	32	3	22
Italy	8	6	1	1	19	7	19
Albania	8	4	1	3	10	9	13
Israel	8	3	0	5	9	14	9
Macedonia	8	2	1	5	10	14	7
Liechtenstein	8	0	0	8	1	34	0

Remaining games
Oct 6: Italy v Macedonia; Liechtenstein v Israel; Spain v Albania.
Oct 9: Albania v Italy; Israel v Spain; Macedonia v Liechtenstein.

Group H

Aug 31 - Liege
Belgium 9 (Mertens 16, Meunier 18, 61, 67, R Lukaku 21, 38, pen 84, Witsel 27, E Hazard 45)
Gibraltar 0
HT: 6-0. **Att:** 24,050. **Ref:** Doyle (Rol)
Belgium: Courtois - Alderweireld, Kompany, Vertonghen, Witsel, Meunier, E Hazard (T Hazard 77), De Bruyne (Tielemans 85), Carrasco, Mertens (Dembele 46), R Lukaku.
Sent off: Witsel 40.
Gibraltar: Ibrahim - Garcia, R Chipolina, Barnett, J Chipolina, Bosio (Pusey 46), Walker, R Casciaro (Guiling 74), Mascarenhas-Olivero, Anthony Hernandez (Pons 61), L Casciaro.
Sent off: Barnett 82.

Aug 31 - Nicosia
Cyprus 3 (Christofi 65, Laban 67, Sotiriou 76)
Bosnia-Herzegovina 2 (Sunjic 33, Visca 44)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 4,143. **Ref:** Marriner (Eng)
Cyprus: Panayi - J Demetriou, Katelaris, Merkis, Margaca (Kastanos 72), Artymatas, Laban, Christofi (Alexandrou 80), C Kyriakou, Charalambides (Avraam 46), Sotiriou.
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Begovic - Bicakcic, Sunjic, O Vranjes, Kolasinac, Pjanic, Cimirot (Jajalo 75), Visca (Milicevic 64), Ibisevic (Hodzic 80), Lulic, Dzeko.

Aug 31 - Piraeus
Greece 0
Estonia 0
Att: 12,379. **Ref:** Liany (Isr)
Greece: Karnezis - Retsos, K Papadopoulos (Stafylidis 66), Manolas, Tzavellas, Tziolis, Zeca, Mantalos (Bakasetas 80), Fortounis, Donis, Vellios (Diamantakos 70).
Estonia: Aksalu - Teniste, Baranov, Jaager, Klavan, Kallaste (Miller 89), Zenjov, Kait, Aleksandr Dmitrijev (Antonov 81), Kruglov, Henri Anier (Tamm 90+3).

Sep 3 - Tallinn
Estonia 1 (Kait 90+2)
Cyprus 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,491. **Ref:** Jaccottet (Swi)
Estonia: Aksalu - Baranov, Jaager, Mets, Teniste, Antonov, Kait, Pikk, Purje (Tamm 87), Henri Anier (Vassiljev 82), Zenjov (Miller 78).
Cyprus: Panayi - J Demetriou, Laifis, Katelaris, Margaca, C Kyriakou, Laban, Christofi (Charalambides 87), Artymatas, Avraam (Kastanos 66), Sotiriou.

Sep 3 - Faro-Loule, Portugal
Gibraltar 0
Bosnia-Herzegovina 4 (Dzeko 35, 85, Kodro 66, Lulic 84)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 805. **Ref:** Arnason (Ice)
Gibraltar: Ibrahim - Garcia, R Chipolina, Mascarenhas-Olivero, J Chipolina, Pons (Pusey 67), Bardon, Walker, Anthony Hernandez, Green (J-P Duarte 80), L Casciaro (Coombes 86).
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Begovic - O Vranjes, Cocalic (Dumic 86), Zukanovic, Kolasinac, Visca, Hadzic (Milicevic 67), Kodro (Bajic 80), Jajalo, Lulic, Dzeko.

Sep 3 - Piraeus
Greece 1 (Zeca 73)
Belgium 2 (Vertonghen 70, R Lukaku 74)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 29,465. **Ref:** Marciniak (Pol)
Greece: Karnezis - Maniatis (Bakasetas 85), Manolas, Papastathopoulos, Tzavellas, Zeca, Tziolis, Samaris, Stafylidis (Lykogiannis 69), Fortounis (Vellios 89), Donis.
Belgium: Courtois - Alderweireld, Vermaelen, Vertonghen, Meunier, Fellaini (Dendoncker 89), Dembele (E Hazard 74), Carrasco (Chadli 79), De Bruyne, R Lukaku, Mertens.

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP H

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Belgium (QF)	8	7	1	0	35	3	22
Bosnia-Herz	8	4	2	2	19	8	14
Greece	8	3	4	1	11	5	13
Cyprus	8	3	1	4	8	12	10
Estonia	8	2	2	4	6	17	8
Gibraltar	8	0	0	8	3	37	0

Remaining games
Oct 7: Bosnia-Herzegovina v Belgium; Cyprus v Greece; Gibraltar v Estonia.
Oct 10: Belgium v Cyprus; Estonia v Bosnia-Herzegovina; Greece v Gibraltar.

Group I

Sep 2 - Tampere
Finland 1 (Ring 8)
Iceland 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 15,835. **Ref:** Kralovec (CzR)
Finland: Hradecky - Toivio (Granlund 70), Arajuuri, J Ojala (Sauli Vaisanen 33), Uronen, Sparv, Lod, Ring, Hamalainen, P Hetemaj (Lam 83), Markkanen.
Iceland: Halldorsson - B Saevarsson (R Gislason 59), Arnason, R Sigurdsson, Magnusson, B Bjarnason, Hallfredsson (B Sigurdarson 59), G Sigurdsson, A Gunnarsson, J Gudmundsson, A Finnbogason (J Bodvarsson 88). *Sent off: R Gislason 76.*

Sep 2 - Kharkiv
Ukraine 2 (Yarmolenko 18, 42)
Turkey 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 36,796.
Ref: Fernandez Borbalan (Spa)
Ukraine: Pyatov - Butko, Khacheridi, Kryvtsov, Matviyenko, Yarmolenko, Rotan (Malinovskyi 79), Kovalenko, Stepanenko, Konoplyanka (Zinchenko 90), Kravets (Besedin 70).
Turkey: Volkan Babacan - Sener, Serdar Aziz (Caglar 73), Mehmet Topal, Ismail, Cigerci, Ozan (Ozyakup 60), Calhanoglu (Arda 68), Emre Belozoglu, Cengiz, Tosun.

Sep 3[1] - Zagreb
Croatia 1 (Vida 74)
Kosovo 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 6,839. **Ref:** Johannesson (Swe)
[1]The first 21 minutes were played the previous day, when the game had to be suspended because the pitch was waterlogged
Croatia: Subasic - Vrsaljko, Lovren, Vida, Pivaric, Kovacic (Badelj 55), Modric, Brozovic (N Kalinic 72), Rakitic (Kramaric 55), Perisic, Mandzukic.
Kosovo: Ujkani - Vojvoda, Rrahmani, Jashanica, Kololli (Paqarada 71), Alushi, Rashica, V Berisha, Kryeziu, Zeneli (Nuhiu 79), Muriqi (Fejzullahu 67).

Sep 5 - Reykjavik
Iceland 2 (G Sigurdsson 47, 66)
Ukraine 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 9,769. **Ref:** Collum (Sco)
Iceland: Halldorsson - B Saevarsson, Ingason, R Sigurdsson, Magnusson, Hallfredsson (O Skulason 89), A Gunnarsson, J Gudmundsson, G Sigurdsson (A Finnbogason 90+2), B Bjarnason, J Bodvarsson (B Sigurdarson 67).
Ukraine: Pyatov - Butko, Khacheridi, Rakitskyi, Matviyenko, Malinovskyi (Zinchenko 71), Stepanenko (Rotan 76), Yarmolenko, Kovalenko, Konoplyanka, Besedin (Kravets 71).

Sep 5 - Shkoder, Albania
Kosovo 0
Finland 1 (Pukki 83)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,446. **Ref:** Schuttengruber (Aut)
Kosovo: Ujkani - Vojvoda, Jashanica, Rrahmani, Paqarada (Muriqi 82), Rashica (Halimi 62), Kryeziu, Alushi, V Berisha, Bernard Berisha (Zeneli 70), Nuhiu.
Finland: Hradecky - Granlund, Arajuuri, Sauli Vaisanen, Arkivuo (Pirinen 64), Hamalainen, Lam, Jensen (Skrabb 54), Sparv, Lod (Tuominen 90+3), Pukki.

Sep 5 - Eskisehir
Turkey 1 (Tosun 75)
Croatia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 28,600. **Ref:** Kassai (Hun)
Turkey: Volkan Babacan - Ayhan, Mehmet Topal, Caglar, Caner, Calhanoglu, Sahin (Okay 87), Ozyakup, Arda (Mor 70), Burak (Ozan 82), Tosun.
Croatia: Subasic - Vrsaljko (Cop 84), Lovren, Vida, Pivaric, Modric, Badelj, Brozovic, Kovacic (Kramaric 71), Perisic, N Kalinic (Mandzukic 62).

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP I

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	8	5	1	2	12	3	16
Iceland	8	5	1	2	11	7	16
Turkey	8	4	2	2	12	8	14
Ukraine	8	4	2	2	11	7	14
Finland	8	2	1	5	6	10	7
Kosovo	8	0	1	7	3	20	1

Remaining games
Oct 6: Croatia v Finland; Kosovo v Ukraine; Turkey v Iceland.
Oct 9: Finland v Turkey; Iceland v Kosovo; Ukraine v Croatia.

● *The 9 group winners will qualify for the finals; the 8 runners-up with the best record (against the countries finishing1st, 3rd, 4th & 5th in the respective groups) will be paired in 4 play-offs, the winners of which will also qualify for the finals*

OCEANIA section

● 0.5 finals places available

Oceania section play-off

1st leg

Sep1 - Auckland
New Zealand 6 (Wood 18, 36, 90+3, Barbarouses 39, Thomas 56, McGlinchey 81)
Solomon Islands 1 (Fa'arodo pen 53)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 10,230. **Ref:** Hauata (Tah)
New Zealand: Marinovic - Tzimopoulos, Boxall, Roux, Wynne, Brotherton, McGlinchey (Colvey 82), Barbarouses (Bevan 74), Wood, Thomas, Patterson (Musa 65).
Solomon Islands: Mango - N Kilifa, Aengari, Poila (Boso 55), Laua, Fa'arodo, Nawo (Hiromana 87), Totori, Feni, Donga, Kaua (Aumae 46).

2nd leg

Sep 5 - Honiara
Solomon Islands 2 (Lea'alafa pen 28, Fa'arodo pen 78)
New Zealand 2 (Bevan 14, N Kilifa og 21)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 10,200. **Ref:** Al Jassim (Qat)
New Zealand 8-3 on agg
Solomon Islands: Mango - N Kilifa, Aengari, Laua, Fa'arodo, Aumae (Naka 66), Lea'alafa (Nawo 71), Hiromana, Totori, Feni, Donga (Kaua 46).
New Zealand: Marinovic - Durante, Tzimopoulos, Doyle, Roux, Wynne, Brotherton, Dyer (Musa 76), Barbarouses, Patterson (Rufer 58), Bevan.

● *As winners, New Zealand will meet the 5th-placed South American country in a play-off for a place in the finals*

SOUTH AMERICA section

● 4.5 finals places available

Aug 31 - Porto Alegre
Brazil 2 (Paulinho 69, Philippe Coutinho 76)
Ecuador 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 38,000. **Ref:** Diaz de Vivar (Par)
Brazil: Alisson - Daniel Alves, Marquinhos, Miranda (Thiago Silva 46), Marcelo, Casemiro, Willian (Luan 84), Paulinho, Renato Augusto (Philippe Coutinho 59), Neymar, Gabriel Jesus.
Ecuador: Banguera - Velasco, Achilier, Arboleda, Ramirez, Quinonez, A Valencia, Noboa, Gaibor (Cazares 73), Martinez (M Caicedo 79), E Valencia (F Caicedo 73).

Aug 31 - Santiago
Chile 0
Paraguay 3 (Vidal og 25, V Caceres 55, R Ortiz 90+3)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 40,671. **Ref:** Pitana (Arg)
Chile: Bravo - Isla, G Medel, G Jara (Orellana 79), Beausejour, Aranguiz, M Diaz (Paredes 57), Vidal, Vargas, Castillo (Valdivia 57), Sanchez.
Paraguay: A Silva - Moreira, Gomez, Da Silva, Alonso, O Romero, V Caceres (R Ortiz 70), C Riveros, Samudio (Bareiro 51), Almiron (Rolon 79), Barrios.

Aug 31 - Lima
Peru 2 (Flores 55, Cueva 59)
Bolivia 1 (Alvarez 72)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 50,501. **Ref:** Cunha (Uru)
Peru: Caceda - Advincula, Ramos, Rodriguez, Trauco, Aquino, Carrillo (Polo 88), Cueva (Hurtado 79), Flores, Farfan, Ruidiaz (Pena 72).
Bolivia: Lampe - Valverde, Raldes, Zenteno, Diego Bejarano, Wayar, Castro (Justiniano 65), Sagredo (J Flores 65), Alvarez, Martins Moreno, Campos.

Aug 31 - Montevideo
Uruguay 0
Argentina 0
Att: 52,614. **Ref:** Carrillo (Per)
Uruguay: Muslera - Caceres, Gimenez, Godin, G Silva, Nandez, A Gonzalez (Corujo 68), Vecino, C Rodriguez, Cavani, Suarez (Stuani 83).
Argentina: Romero - Mercado, Fazio, Otamendi, Acuna (Acosta 61), Pizarro, Biglia, Di Maria (Correa 90+2), Messi, Icardi, Dybala (Pastore 71).

Aug 31 - San Cristobal
Venezuela 0
Colombia 0
Att: 38,479. **Ref:** Sampaio (Bra)
Venezuela: Farinez - Garcia, Chancellor, Villanueva, R Feltscher, Cordova (Figuera 84), Herrera, Rincon, Machis (Murillo 55), Martinez (Otero 55), S Rondon.
Colombia: Ospina - Arias, C Zapata, O Murillo, Fabra, C Sanchez (Aguilar 75), Barrios, Cuadrado, Chara (Muriel 80), Cardona (G Moreno 63), Falcao.

Sep 5 - Buenos Aires
Argentina 1 (R Feltscher og 54)
Venezuela 1 (Murillo 51)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 44,776. **Ref:** Tobar (Chl)
Argentina: Romero - Mascherano, Fazio, Otamendi, Acosta, Pizarro, Banega, Di Maria (Acuna 25), Messi, Icardi (Pastore 75), Dybala (Benedetto 63).
Venezuela: Farinez - Garcia, Chancellor, Villanueva, R Feltscher, Moreno, Figuera, Murillo, Herrera (Colina 77), Cordova (Velazquez 89), S Rondon (Martinez 82).

Sep 5 - La Paz
Bolivia 1 (Arce pen 59)
Chile 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 31,555. **Ref:** Roldan (Col)
Bolivia: Lampe - Valverde (Candia 73), Raldes, Zenteno, Diego Bejarano, Campos (Chumacero 66), Justiniano, J Flores, Escobar (Alvarez 46), Martins Moreno, Arce. *Sent off: Chumacero 90+1.*
Chile: Bravo - Isla, G Medel, P Diaz, Beausejour, Silva, M Diaz (Valdivia 66), Hernandez, Vidal (Valencia 80), Vargas (Paredes 63), Sanchez.

Sep 5 - Barranquilla
Colombia 1 (Falcao 56)
Brazil 1 (Willian 45+2)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 46,083. **Ref:** Valenzuela (Ven)
Colombia: Ospina - Arias, C Zapata, D Sanchez, Fabra (Tesillo 85), Aguilar, C Sanchez, Cuadrado (Chara 46), Rodriguez, Cardona (Gutierrez 71), Falcao.
Brazil: Alisson - Daniel Alves, Marquinhos, Thiago Silva (Rodrigo Caio 90+4), Filipe Luis, Fernandinho, Willian, Paulinho, Renato Augusto (Philippe Coutinho 75), Neymar, Roberto Firmino (Gabriel Jesus 63).

Sep 5 - Quito
Ecuador 1 (E Valencia pen 80)
Peru 2 (Flores 73, Hurtado 76)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Caceres (Par)
Ecuador: Banguera - Velasco, Achilier, Arboleda, Ramirez, A Valencia, Orejuela (Gaibor 81), Noboa, Cazares (Estrada 81), F Caicedo (M Caicedo 71), E Valencia.
Peru: Caceda - Corzo, Ramos, Rodriguez, Trauco, Tapia (Cartagena 63), Yotun, Carrillo (Hurtado 74), Cueva (Santamaria 81), Flores, Guerrero. *Sent off: Ramos 79.*

Sep 5 - Asuncion
Paraguay 1 (A Romero 88)
Uruguay 2 (Valverde 76, Gomez og 80)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Ricci (Bra)
Paraguay: A Silva - Moreira, Gomez, Da Silva, Alonso, A Romero, V Caceres (R Ortiz 41), C Riveros (Dominguez 79), O Romero, Almiron, Barrios (Salcedo 66).
Uruguay: Muslera - M Pereira, Gimenez, Godin, Caceres, Nandez (Sanchez 71), Valverde, Vecino, C Rodriguez (Stuani 63), Suarez (Arevalo 90), Cavani.

WC QUALS – SOUTH AMERICA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brazil (QF)	16	11	4	1	38	11	37
Uruguay	16	8	3	5	28	18	27
Colombia	16	7	5	4	19	16	26
Peru	16	7	3	6	26	25	24
Argentina	16	6	6	4	16	15	24
Chile	16	7	2	7	24	23	23
Paraguay	16	6	3	7	17	23	21
Ecuador	16	6	2	8	24	24	20
Bolivia	16	4	1	11	14	34	13
Venezuela	16	1	5	10	18	35	8

Remaining games
Oct 5: Argentina v Peru; Bolivia v Brazil; Chile v Ecuador; Colombia v Paraguay; Venezuela v Uruguay.
Oct 10: Brazil v Chile; Ecuador v Argentina; Paraguay v Venezuela; Peru v Colombia; Uruguay v Bolivia.

● *The top 4 will qualify for the finals; the 5th-placed country will meet New Zealand, the winner of the Oceania section play-off, in a play-off for a place in the finals*

2019 ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

3rd round

Group A
Sep 5 - Taipa
Macau 0
India 2 (B Singh 57, 82)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 600. **Ref:** Al Ali (Jor)

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
India	3	3	0	0	4	0	9
Myanmar	2	1	0	1	4	1	3
Kyrgyzstan	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Macau	3	0	0	3	0	7	0

Group B
Sep 5 - Malacca City
Malaysia 1 (Syazwan 56)
Hong Kong 1 (Sandro 53)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,646. **Ref:** Beath (Aus)
Sent off: Rizal 90, Aidil 90+2 (both Malaysia)

Sep 5 - Pyongyang
North Korea 2 (Kim Su-yong 23, Ri Yong-jik 87)
Lebanon 2 (Mansour 47, Maatouk 90+4)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 31,000. **Ref:** Asimov (Uzb)
Sent off: (from the bench) Sabra (Lebanon) 90+2

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lebanon	3	2	1	0	6	3	7
North Korea	2	0	2	0	3	3	2
Hong Kong	3	0	2	1	2	4	2
Malaysia	2	0	1	1	2	3	1

Group C
Sep 5 - Phnom Penh
Cambodia 1 (Vathanaka 10)
Vietnam 2 (Nguyen Van Quyet 4, Nguyen Quang Hai 81)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 34,587. **Ref:** Tojo (Jap)

Sep 5 - Amman
Jordan 4 (Murjan 24, Al Saify 33, Al Bakhit pen 45, Al Dardour 89)
Afghanistan 1 (Zubayr Amiri pen 72)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 1,036. **Ref:** Rowan (Ind)

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jordan	3	2	1	0	11	1	7
Vietnam	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Cambodia	3	1	0	2	2	9	3
Afghanistan	3	0	1	2	2	6	1

Group D
Sep 5 - Thimphu
Bhutan 0
Palestine 2 (Pinto 51, Bahdari 90+5)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 7,800. **Ref:** Ho (HK)

Sep 5 - Muscat
Oman 5 (Al Khaldi 5, Al Hajri 58, Al Yahyaei 68, Al Yahmadi 86, Al Hasani 88)
Maldives 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 1,136. **Ref:** Vo (Vie)

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Palestine	3	3	0	0	7	1	9
Oman	3	2	0	1	20	2	6
Maldives	3	1	0	2	2	8	3
Bhutan	3	0	0	3	0	18	0

Group E
Sep 5 - Riffa
Bahrain 5 (Al Aswad 11, Madan 45+4, Abduljabbar 56, 89, Helal 74)
Taiwan 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 362. **Ref:** Noor (Mly)

Sep 5 - Singapore
Singapore 1 (Shakir 63)
Turkmenistan 1 (Annadurdyyev 82)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,712. **Ref:** Yamamoto (Jap)

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bahrain	3	2	1	0	7	1	7
Turkmenistan	3	1	1	1	5	4	4
Taiwan	3	1	0	2	3	9	3
Singapore	3	0	2	1	2	3	2

Group F
Sep 5 - Kathmandu
Nepal 1 (Magar 61)
Tajikistan 2 (M Dzhalilov 25, Vasiev 30)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 1,200. **Ref:** Al Hoaish (Sau)

Sep 5 - Bacolod
Philippines 2 (P Younghusband 30, J Younghusband 71)
Yemen 2 (Al Radaei 28, Al Matari 56)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 2,911. **Ref:** Kim Dong-jin (SKo)

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Philippines	3	2	1	0	10	6	7
Yemen	3	1	2	0	4	3	5
Tajikistan	3	1	0	2	6	7	3
Nepal	3	0	1	2	2	6	1

● *A total of 6 rounds of games will be played*

● *The top 2 in each group will qualify for the 24-team finals (12 other countries have already qualified)*

FRIENDLIES

Saturday, August 26
Aug 26 - Malacca City, Malaysia
Iraq 1 (Fayyadh 70)
Syria 1 (Al Khatib 15)
HT: 0-1

Tuesday, August 29
Aug 29 - Riffa
Bahrain 0
Jordan 0

Aug 29 - Yangon
Myanmar 1 (Kyaw Ko Ko 89)
Malaysia 0
HT: 0-0

Wednesday, August 30
Aug 30 - Muscat
Oman 2 (Al Khaldi 44, Al Ruzaiqi 55)
Afghanistan 0
HT: 1-0

Thursday, August 31
Aug 31 - Singapore
Singapore 1 (Safuwan pen 76)
Hong Kong 1 (Chan Siu Ki 1)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,837
Sent off: Ong (Singapore) 86

Aug 31 - Agadir, Morocco
Togo 2 (Dove 26, Dossevi 49)
Niger 0
HT: 1-0

Saturday, September 2
Sep 2 - Toronto
Canada 2 (Jackson-Hamel 16, Osorio 30)
Jamaica 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 21,724. **Ref:** Montero (CR)
Canada: Leutwiler - Petrasso, James, Jakovic, De Jong (Adekugbe 46; Kaye 54), Piette, Hutchinson (Chapman 64), Osorio (Ricketts 90+1), Hoilett, Edwards (Davies 70), Jackson-Hamel (Larin 46). *Sent off: Davies 76.*
Jamaica: Blake (Miller 74) - Lawrence (Francis 61), Lowe, J Taylor, Powell, Fisher, Binns (Grandison 56), Watson (D Williams 56), Morris (Hardware 58), R Williams (Harris 58), Kelly.

Sep 2 - Bekasi
Indonesia 0
Fiji 0

Sep 2 - Maputo
Mozambique 1 (Domingues 59)
Kenya 1 (Johanna 85)
HT: 0-0

Sunday, September 3
Sep 3 - Malabo
Equatorial Guinea 1 (Jordan 75)
Benin 2 (Pote 42, Dossou 61)
HT: 0-1

Monday, September 4
Sep 4 - Agadir, Morocco
Niger 2 (Sidibe 46, Adebayor pen 87)
Mauritania 0
HT: 0-0

Sep 4 - Agadir, Morocco
Togo 0
Malawi 1 (Mbulu 14)
HT: 0-1

UNDER-17 WORLD CUP

To be played in India

Group stage schedule

Group A
Oct 6: Colombia v Ghana; India v USA.
Oct 9: Ghana v USA; India v Colombia.
Oct 12: Ghana v India; USA v Colombia.

Group B
Oct 6: New Zealand v Turkey; Paraguay v Mali.
Oct 9: Turkey v Mali; Paraguay v New Zealand.
Oct 12: Mali v New Zealand; Turkey v Paraguay.

Group C
Oct 7: Germany v Costa Rica: Iran v Guinea.
Oct 10: Costa Rica v Guinea; Iran v Germany.
Oct 13: Costa Rica v Iran; Guinea v Germany.

Group D
Oct 7: Brazil v Spain; North Korea v Niger.
Oct 10: Spain v Niger; North Korea v Brazil.
Oct 13: Niger v Brazil; Spain v North Korea.

Group E
Oct 8: New Caledonia v France; Honduras v Japan.
Oct 11: France v Japan; Honduras v New Caledonia.
Oct 14: France v Honduras; Japan v New Caledonia.

Group F
Oct 8: Chile v England; Iraq v Mexico.
Oct 11: England v Mexico; Iraq v Chile.
Oct 14: Mexico v Chile; England v Iraq.

● *The top 2 in each group and the 4 3rd-placed teams with the best record will qualify for the1st knockout round (last16)*

Club football

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Quarter-finals

1st legs

Sep13
Barcelona (Ecu) 1 (Alvez 78)
Santos (Bra) 1 (Bruno Henrique 46)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Fedorczuk (Uru)

Sep13
Botafogo (Bra) 0
Gremio (Bra) 0
Ref: Argote (Ven)

Sep13
San Lorenzo (Arg) 2 (Blandi 33, pen 50)
Lanus (Arg) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Roldan (Col)

Sep14
Jorge Wilstermann (Bol) 3 (Zenteno 4, Alvarez 50, Machado 81)
River Plate (Arg) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Ricci (Bra)

2nd legs

Sep 20
Gremio 1 (Barrios 62)
Botafogo 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Loustau (Arg)
Gremio1-0 on agg

Sep 20
Santos 0
Barcelona 1 (Alvez 67)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Carrillo (Per)
Barcelona 2-1 on agg

Sep 21
Lanus 2 (Sand 10, Pasquini 15)
San Lorenzo 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Caceres (Par)
Agg 2-2. Lanus 4-3 on pens

Sep 21
River Plate 8 (Scocco 8, 13, 19, 46, 57, Perez 35, 66, Fernandez 52)
Jorge Wilstermann 0
HT: 4-0. **Ref:** Bascunan (Chl)
River Plate 8-3 on agg

Semi-finals draw

Barcelona v Gremio
River Plate v Lanus
1st legs - Oct 24/25; 2nd legs - Oct 31/Nov1

SUDAMERICANA CUP

3rd round

1st legs - Aug 22-Sep14; 2nd legs - Sep12-21
Atletico Tucuman (Arg) v Independiente (Arg)
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
Cerro Porteno (Par) v Junior (Col)
0-0, 1-3 (agg 1-3)
Chapecoense (Bra) v Flamengo (Bra)
0-0, 0-4 (agg 0-4)
Corinthians (Bra) v Racing Club (Arg)
1-1, 0-0 (agg 1-1, Racing Club on away goals)
Fluminense (Bra) v LDU Quito (Ecu)
1-0, 1-2 (agg 2-2, Fluminense on away goals)
Libertad (Par) v Santa Fe (Col)
1-0, 1-1 (agg 2-1)
Nacional (Par) v Estudiantes (Arg)
1-0, 1-0 (agg 2-0)
Sport Recife (Bra) v Ponte Preta (Bra)
3-1, 0-1 (agg 3-2)

Quarter-finals draw

Fluminense v Flamengo
Libertad v Racing Club
Nacional v Independiente
Sport Recife v Junior
1st legs - Oct 24-26; 2nd legs - Nov1/2

AFRICA

CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals

1st legs - Sep16/17; 2nd legs - Sep 23/24
Al Ahli Tripoli (Lby) v Etoile Sahel (Tun)
0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2)
Al Ahly (Egy) v Esperance Tunis (Tun)
2-2, 2-1 (agg 4-3)
Ferroviario Beira (Moz) v USM Alger (Alg)
1-1, 0-0 (agg 1-1, USM Alger on away goals)
Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf) v
Wydad Casablanca (Mor)
1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, Wydad 3-2 on pens)

CONFEDERATION CUP

Quarter-finals

1st legs - Sep15/16; 2nd legs - Sep 22-24
Al Hilal Obayed (Sud) v TP Mazembe (DRC)
1-2, 0-5 (agg 1-7)
FUS Rabat (Mor) v CS Sfaxien (Tun)
1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, FUS Rabat 5-4 on pens)
MC Alger (Alg) v Club Africain (Tun)
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
SuperSport United (SAf) v Zesco United (Zam)
0-0, 2-2 (agg 2-2, SuperSport on away goals)

CAPE VERDE ISLANDS

2017 Championship Final

1st leg - Aug 20; 2nd leg - Aug 27
Ultramarina v Sporting Praia 1-2, 2-3 (agg 3-5)

CONGO

2017 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leopards (C)	34	25	6	3	70	22	81
AS Otoho	34	22	8	4	49	25	74
CARA	34	20	9	5	66	26	69
La Mancha	34	19	6	9	46	24	63
Etoile Congo[1]	34	17	8	9	44	22	58
JS Talangai	34	14	11	9	40	35	53
St-Michel O	34	13	8	13	38	47	47
Patronage	34	11	10	13	34	32	43
Tongo Jambon	34	11	7	16	37	48	40
Inter Club	34	11	6	17	34	42	39
Diables Noirs	34	9	12	13	28	37	39
Cheminots	34	10	9	15	35	46	39
JS Poto-Poto	34	10	8	16	30	38	38
Kondzo	34	9	9	16	35	51	36
Nico-Nicoye	34	8	11	15	30	45	35
Jeunes Fauves	34	7	8	19	27	42	29
Nathaly's[1] (R)	34	7	9	18	24	53	29
Kimbong'la (R)	34	8	5	21	24	56	29

[1] *1pt deducted*

GUINEA

2016-17 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Horoya (C)	26	22	3	1	61	6	69
Wakirya	26	12	10	4	28	18	46
ASFAG	26	12	7	7	26	21	43
Hafia	26	11	8	7	34	25	41
Satellite	26	10	6	10	27	31	36
Renaissance	26	9	7	10	30	30	34
Ashanti GB	26	8	9	9	24	25	33
Fello Star	26	7	9	10	19	30	30
Kaloum	26	5	14	7	21	19	29
Gangan	26	7	8	11	23	27	29
CI Kamsar	26	6	11	9	24	29	29
Atl Coleah	26	7	7	12	26	33	28
Soumba (R)	26	7	5	14	17	38	26
CO Coyah (R)	26	6	2	18	14	42	20

NIGERIA

2017 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Plateau Utd (C)	38	19	9	10	49	25	66
MFM	38	19	5	14	42	41	62
Enyimba	38	18	7	13	43	28	61
Akwa United	38	17	9	12	46	30	60
Nasarawa Utd	38	16	8	14	35	30	56
El Kanemi W	38	18	2	18	39	43	56
Lobi Stars	38	15	9	14	43	39	54
Kano Pillars	38	16	6	16	38	35	54
Ifeanyi Ubah	38	15	9	14	39	38	54
Sunshine Stars	38	17	3	18	41	43	54
Niger Tor'does	38	16	6	16	31	35	54
Abia Warriors	38	15	8	15	44	36	53
Enugu Rangers	38	14	11	13	39	44	53
Wikki Tourists	38	16	5	17	36	41	53
Rivers United	38	14	10	14	34	33	52
Katsina United	38	15	7	16	37	38	52
Shooting S (R)	38	13	11	14	32	38	50
ABS (R)	38	14	7	17	37	50	49
Gombe Utd (R)	38	11	10	17	32	48	43
Remo Stars (R)	38	7	8	23	27	49	29

ASIA

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals

1st legs - Aug 21-23; 2nd legs - Sep11-13
Al Ain (UAE) v Al Hilal (Sau)
0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3)
Kawasaki Frontale (Jap) v
Urawa Red Diamonds (Jap)
3-1, 1-4 (agg 4-5)
Persepolis (Irn) v Al Ahli (Sau)
2-2, 3-1 (agg 5-3)
Shanghai SIPG (Chn) v
Guangzhou Evergrande (Chn)
4-0, 1-5 (aet) (agg 5-5,
Shanghai SIPG 5-4 on pens)

EAST TIMOR

2017 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Karketu (C)	14	8	4	2	43	15	28
Ponta Leste	14	7	4	3	28	16	25
Carsae	14	6	5	3	21	16	23
SL Benfica	14	6	3	5	20	15	21
Academica	14	4	6	4	14	12	18
Cacusan	14	4	6	4	22	29	18
Zebra (R)	14	2	6	6	17	29	12
P Taibesse (R)	14	1	2	11	11	44	5

CONCACAF

CONCACAF LEAGUE

Semi-finals

1st legs - Sep13/14; 2nd legs - Sep 21
Arabe Unido (Pan) v Santos de Guapiles (CR)
0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)
Plaza Amador (Pan) v Olimpia (Hnd)
1-7, 1-1 (agg 2-8)

● *The tournament winner will qualify for the 2018 CONCACAF Champions League*

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

2017 Championship Final

Aug 27: Atletico Pantoja 1 Atlantico 1 (aet, Atlantico 4-3 on pens).

KEY TO TABLES
(C) = champions
(R) = relegated
(QF) = qualified for finals
(QPO) = qualified for play-off

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● Sport/Foot (Belgium) ● TIPS Bladet (Denmark)
● World Soccer (UK)

ITALY: SERIE A 2017-18

ATALANTA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Etrit **BERISHA** (Alb) (28) 10.03.89
91 Pierluigi **GOLLINI** (22) 18.03.95
31 Francesco **ROSSI** (26) 27.04.91

DEFENDERS
95 Alessandro **BASTONI** (18) 13.04.99
13 Mattia **CALDARA** (23) 05.05.94
21 Timothy **CASTAGNE** (Blg) (21) 05.12.95
93 Boukary **DRAME** (Sen) (32) 22.07.85
8 Robin **GOSENS** (Ger) (23) 05.07.94
33 Hans **HATEBOER** (Hol) (23) 09.01.94
28 Gianluca **MANCINI** (21) 17.04.96
5 Andrea **MASIELLO** (31) 05.02.86
6 Jose Luis **PALOMINO** (Arg)(27) 05.01.90
37 Leonardo **SPINAZZOLA** (24) 25.03.93
3 Rafael **TOLOI** (Bra) (27) 10.10.90

MIDFIELDERS
4 Bryan **CRISTANTE** (22) 03.03.95
15 Marten **DE ROON** (Hol) (26) 29.03.91
11 Remo **FREULER** (Swi) (25) 15.04.92
10 Alejandro **GOMEZ** (Arg) (29) 15.02.88
32 Nicolas **HAAS** (Swi) (21) 23.01.96
72 Josip **ILICIC** (Sln) (29) 29.01.88
27 Jasmin **KURTIC** (Sln) (28) 10.01.89
23 Filippo **MELEGONI** (18) 18.02.99
88 Joao **SCHMIDT** (Bra) (24) 19.05.93

FORWARDS
9 Andreas **CORNELIUS** (Den) (24) 16.03.93
7 Riccardo **ORSOLINI** (20) 24.01.97
29 Andrea **PETAGNA** (22) 30.06.95
20 Luca **VIDO** (20) 03.02.97

COACH
Gian Piero **GASPERINI** (59) 26.01.58

BENEVENTO

GOALKEEPERS
1 Vid **BELEC** (Sln) (27) 06.06.90
22 Alberto **BRIGNOLI** (26) 19.08.91
12 Riccardo **PISCITELLI** (23) 10.10.93

DEFENDERS
88 Luca **ANTEI** (25) 19.04.92
21 Andrea **COSTA** (31) 01.02.86
17 Gianluca **DI CHIARA** (24) 26.12.93
6 Berat **DJIMSITI** (Alb) (24) 19.02.93
95 Andreaw **GRAVILLON** (Fra) (19) 08.02.98
18 Bright **GYAMFI** (Gha) (21) 20.01.96
77 Achraf **LAZAAR** (Mor) (25) 22.01.92
3 Gaetano **LETIZIA** (27) 29.06.90
5 Fabio **LUCIONI** (30) 25.09.87
23 Lorenzo **VENUTI** (22) 12.04.95

MIDFIELDERS
8 Danilo **CATALDI** (23) 06.08.94
13 Raman **CHIBSAH** (Gha) (24) 10.03.93
10 Amato **CICIRETTI** (23) 31.12.93
7 Marco **D'ALESSANDRO** (26) 17.02.91
4 Lorenzo **DEL PINTO** (27) 17.06.90
98 Alessio **DONNARUMMA** (19) 16.02.98
20 Ledian **MEMUSHAJ** (Alb) (30) 07.12.86
14 Nicolas **VIOLA** (27) 12.10.89
73 Giovanni **VOLPICELLI** (18) 24.09.99

FORWARDS
90 Samuel **ARMENTEROS** (Swe) (27) 27.05.90
99 Enrico **BRIGNOLA** (18) 08.07.99
11 Massimo **CODA** (28) 10.11.88
33 Pietro **IEMMELLO** (25) 06.03.92
87 Cristiano **LOMBARDI** (22) 19.08.95
26 Vittorio **PARIGINI** (21) 25.03.96
32 George **PUSCAS** (Rom) (21) 08.04.96

COACH
Marco **BARONI** (54) 11.09.63

BOLOGNA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Angelo **DA COSTA** (Bra) (33) 12.11.83
83 Antonio **MIRANTE** (34) 08.07.83
34 Federico **RAVAGLIA** (17) 11.11.99
29 Antonio **SANTURRO** (25) 29.02.92

DEFENDERS
13 Fabrizio **BRIGNANI** (19) 13.01.98
6 Sebastian **DE MAIO** (Fra) (30) 05.03.87
3 Giancarlo **GONZALEZ** (CR)(29) 08.02.88
18 Filip **HELANDER** (Swe) (24) 22.04.93
4 Emil **KRAFTH** (Swe) (23) 02.08.94
33 Cheick **KEITA** (Mli) (20) 16.11.96
20 Domenico **MAIETTA** (35) 03.08.82
25 Adam **MASINA** (Mor) (23) 02.01.94
15 Ibrahima **MBAYE** (Sen) (22) 19.11.94
35 Vasilis **TOROSIDIS** (Gre) (32) 10.06.85

MIDFIELDERS
12 Lorenzo **CRISETIG** (24) 20.01.93
77 Godfred **DONSAH** (Gha) (21) 07.06.96
21 Cesar **FALLETTI** (Uru) (24) 02.12.92
11 Ladislav **KREJCI** (CzR) (25) 05.07.92
2 Adam **NAGY** (Hun) (22) 17.06.95
16 Andrea **POLI** (28) 29.09.89
5 Erick **PULGAR** (Chl) (23) 15.01.94
8 Saphir **TAIDER** (Alg) (25) 29.02.92
17 Juan **VALENCIA** (Col) (19) 20.06.98

FORWARDS
19 Felipe **AVENATTI** (Uru) (24) 26.04.93
10 Mattia **DESTRO** (26) 20.03.91
14 Federico **DI FRANCESCO** (23) 14.06.94
30 Orji **OKWONKWO** (Nga) (19) 19.01.98
24 Rodrigo **PALACIO** (Arg) (35) 05.02.82
7 Bruno **PETKOVIC** (Cro) (23) 16.09.94
9 Simone **VERDI** (25) 12.07.92

COACH
Roberto **DONADONI** (54) 09.09.63

CAGLIARI

GOALKEEPERS
28 Alessio **CRAGNO** (23) 28.06.94
26 Luca **CROSTA** (19) 23.02.98
29 Riccardo **DAGA** (17) 13.01.00
1 **RAFAEL** (Bra) (35) 03.03.82

DEFENDERS
3 Marco **ANDREOLLI** (31) 10.06.86
24 Marco **CAPUANO** (25) 14.10.91
23 Luca **CEPPITELLI** (27) 08.11.89
12 Senna **MIANGUE** (Blg) (20) 05.02.97
19 Fabio **PISACANE** (31) 28.01.86
13 Filippo **ROMAGNA** (20) 26.05.97
2 Gregory **VAN DER WIEL** (Hol) (29) 03.02.88

MIDFIELDERS
18 Nicolo **BARELLA** (20) 07.02.97
8 Luca **CIGARINI** (31) 20.06.86
7 Andrea **COSSU** (37) 03.05.80
27 Alessandro **DEIOLA** (22) 01.08.95
4 Daniele **DESSENA** (30) 10.05.87
16 Paolo **FARAGO** (24) 12.02.93
21 Artur **IONITA** (Mol) (27) 17.08.90
10 Joao **PEDRO** (Bra) (25) 09.03.92
20 Simone **PADOIN** (33) 18.03.84

FORWARDS
17 Diego **FARIAS** (Bra) (27) 10.05.90
9 Niccolo **GIANNETTI** (26) 12.05.91
36 Federico **MELCHIORRI** (30) 06.01.87
30 Leonardo **PAVOLETTI** (28) 26.11.88
25 Marco **SAU** (29) 03.11.87

COACH
Massimo **RASTELLI** (48) 27.12.68

CHIEVO

GOALKEEPERS
98 Alessandro **CONFENTE** (19) 07.06.98
1 Filippo **PAVONI** (18) 08.08.99
90 Andrea **SECULIN** (27) 14.07.90
70 Stefano **SORRENTINO** (38) 28.03.79

DEFENDERS
14 Mattia **BANI** (23) 10.12.93
29 Fabrizio **CACCIATORE** (30) 08.10.86
12 Bostjan **CESAR** (Sln) (35) 09.07.82
3 Dario **DAINELLI** (38) 09.06.79
21 Nicolas **FREY** (Fra) (33) 06.03.84
5 Alessandro **GAMBERINI** (36) 27.08.81
18 Massimo **GOBBI** (36) 31.10.80
2 Pawel **JAROSZYNSKI** (Pol) (23) 02.10.94
40 Nenad **TOMOVIC** (Ser) (30) 30.08.87

MIDFIELDERS
77 Samuel **BASTIEN** (Blg) (21) 26.09.96
23 Valter **BIRSA** (Sln) (31) 07.08.86
19 Lucas **CASTRO** (Arg) (28) 09.04.89
27 Fabio **DEPAOLI** (20) 24.04.97
7 Luca **GARRITANO** (23) 11.02.94
10 Gianluca **GAUDINO** (Ger) (20) 11.11.96
56 Perparim **HETEMAJ** (Fin) (30) 12.12.86
11 Mehdi **LERIS** (Fra) (19) 23.05.98
8 Ivan **RADOVANOVIC** (Ser) (29) 29.08.88
4 Nicola **RIGONI** (26) 12.11.90
55 Emanuel **VIGNATO** (17) 24.08.00

FORWARDS
45 Roberto **INGLESE** (25) 12.11.91
69 Riccardo **MEGGIORINI** (32) 04.09.85
31 Sergio **PELLISSIER** (38) 12.04.79
20 Manuel **PUCCIARELLI** (26) 17.06.91
9 Mariusz **STEPINSKI** (Pol) (22) 12.05.95

COACH
Rolando **MARAN** (54) 14.07.63

CROTONE

GOALKEEPERS
1 Alex **CORDAZ** (34) 01.01.83
3 Marco **FESTA** (25) 06.06.92
78 Aniello **VISCOVO** (18) 21.06.99

DEFENDERS
93 Arlind **AJETI** (Alb) (24) 25.09.93
44 Leandro **CABRERA** (Uru) (26) 17.06.91
7 Federico **CECCHERINI** (25) 11.05.92
21 Giuseppe **CUOMO** (19) 02.02.98
37 Davide **FARAONI** (25) 25.10.91
87 Bruno **MARTELLA** (25) 14.08.92
20 Daniel **PAVLOVIC** (Bos) (29) 22.04.88
31 Mario **SAMPIRISI** (24) 31.10.92
34 Stefan **SIMIC** (CzR) (22) 20.01.95

MIDFIELDERS
10 Andrea **BARBERIS** (23) 11.12.93
89 Giovanni **CROCIATA** (20) 11.08.97
98 Pasquale **GIANNOTTI** (18) 05.06.99
13 Mariano **IZCO** (Arg) (34) 13.03.83
47 Andrej **KOTNIK** (Sln) (22) 04.08.95
11 Oliver **KRAGL** (Ger) (27) 12.05.90
38 Rolando **MANDRAGORA** (20) 29.06.97
9 Andrea **NALINI** (27) 20.06.90
6 Marcus **ROHDEN** (Swe) (26) 11.05.91
8 Aristoteles **ROMERO** (Ven) (21) 18.10.95
5 Adrian **STOIAN** (Rom) (26) 11.02.91
14 Cazim **SULJIC** (Bos) (20) 29.10.96
24 Aleksander **TONEV** (Bul) (27) 03.02.90

FORWARDS
28 Giuseppe **BORELLO** (18) 28.04.99
17 Ante **BUDIMIR** (Cro) (26) 22.07.91
99 **SIMY** Nwankwo (Nga) (25) 07.05.92
29 Marcello **TROTTA** (25) 29.09.92
32 Marco **TUMMINELLO** (18) 06.11.98

COACH
Davide **NICOLA** (44) 05.03.73

FIORENTINA

GOALKEEPERS
22 Michele **CEROFOLINI** (18) 04.01.99
97 Bartlomiej **DRAGOWSKI** (Pol) (20) 19.08.97
57 Marco **SPORTIELLO** (25) 10.05.92

DEFENDERS
13 Davide **ASTORI** (30) 07.01.87
3 Cristiano **BIRAGHI** (25) 01.09.92
76 Bruno **GASPAR** (Por) (24) 21.04.93
51 Petko **HRISTOV** (Bul) (18) 01.03.99
2 Vincent **LAURINI** (Fra) (28) 10.06.89
4 Nikola **MILENKOVIC** (Ser) (19) 12.10.97
15 Maximiliano **OLIVERA** (Uru) (25) 05.03.92
20 German **PEZZELLA** (Arg) (26) 27.06.91
26 Luca **RANIERI** (24) 23.04.93
31 **VITOR HUGO** (Bra) (26) 20.05.91

MIDFIELDERS
5 Milan **BADELJ** (Cro) (28) 25.02.89
24 Marco **BENASSI** (23) 08.09.94
19 Sebastian **CRISTOFORO** (Uru) (24) 23.08.93
10 Valentin **EYSSERIC** (Fra) (25) 25.03.92
11 Ianis **HAGI** (Rom) (18) 22.10.98
6 Carlos **SANCHEZ** (Col) (31) 06.02.86
8 Riccardo **SAPONARA** (25) 21.12.91
17 Jordan **VERETOUT** (Fra) (24) 01.03.93

FORWARDS
30 Khouma **BABACAR** (Sen) (24) 17.03.93
25 Federico **CHIESA** (19) 25.10.97
28 Gil **DIAS** (Por) (21) 28.09.96
32 Gabriele **GORI** (18) 13.02.99
27 Simone **LO FASO** (19) 18.02.98
73 Marco **MELI** (17) 02.02.00
21 Riccardo **SOTTIL** (18) 03.06.99
9 Giovanni **SIMEONE** (Arg) (22) 05.07.95
77 Cyril **THEREAU** (Fra) (34) 24.04.83
7 Rafik **ZEKHNINI** (Nor) (19) 12.01.98

COACH
Stefano **PIOLI** (51) 20.10.65

GENOA

GOALKEEPERS
23 Eugenio **LAMANNA** (28) 07.08.89
1 Mattia **PERIN** (24) 10.11.92
68 Alessio **ROLLANDI** (18) 06.07.99
38 Lukas **ZIMA** (CzR) (23) 09.01.94

DEFENDERS
14 Davide **BIRASCHI** (23) 02.07.94
3 Santiago **GENTILETTI** (Arg) (32) 09.01.85
5 Armando **IZZO** (25) 02.03.92
18 Francesco **MIGLIORE** (29) 17.04.88
20 Aleandro **ROSI** (30) 17.05.87
13 Luca **ROSSETTINI** (32) 09.05.85
2 Nicolas **SPOLLI** (Arg) (34) 20.02.83
87 Ervin **ZUKANOVIC** (Bos) (30) 11.02.87

MIDFIELDERS
8 Andrea **BERTOLACCI** (26) 11.01.91
21 Petar **BRLEK** (Cro) (23) 29.01.94
9 Ricardo **CENTURION** (Arg) (24) 19.01.93
4 Isaac **COFIE** (Gha) (26) 20.09.91
93 Diego **LAXALT** (Uru) (24) 07.02.93
22 Darko **LAZOVIC** (Ser) (27) 15.09.90
40 Stephane **OMEONGA** (Blg) (21) 27.03.96
27 Federico **RICCI** (23) 27.05.94
30 Luca **RIGONI** (32) 07.12.84
25 Thomas **RODRIGUEZ** (Chl)(21) 05.04.96
11 Adel **TAARABT** (Mor) (28) 24.05.89
44 Miguel **VELOSO** (Por) (31) 11.05.86

FORWARDS
16 Andrey **GALABINOV** (Bul) (28) 27.11.88
10 Gianluca **LAPADULA** (27) 07.02.90
17 Raffaele **PALLADINO** (33) 17.04.84
19 Goran **PANDEV** (Mac) (34) 27.07.83
64 Pietro **PELLEGRI** (16) 17.03.01
74 Eddy **SALCEDO** (15) 01.10.01

COACH
Ivan **JURIC** (Cro) (42) 25.08.75

INTERNAZIONALE

GOALKEEPERS
46 Tommaso **BERNI** (34) 06.03.83
1 Samir **HANDANOVIC** (Sln) (33) 14.07.84
27 Daniele **PADELLI** (31) 25.10.85

DEFENDERS
7 Joao **CANCELO** (Por) (23) 27.05.94
29 **DALBERT** (Bra) (24) 08.09.93
33 Danilo **D'AMBROSIO** (29) 09.09.88
25 Joao **MIRANDA** (Bra) (33) 07.09.84
55 Yuto **NAGATOMO** (Jap) (31) 12.09.86
13 Andrea **RANOCCHIA** (29) 16.02.88
21 Davide **SANTON** (26) 02.01.91
37 Milan **SKRINIAR** (Slk) (22) 11.02.95
61 Zinho **VANHEUSDEN** (Blg) (18) 29.07.99

MIDFIELDERS
77 Marcelo **BROZOVIC** (Cro) (24) 16.11.92
87 Antonio **CANDREVA** (30) 28.02.87
5 Roberto **GAGLIARDINI** (23) 07.04.94
10 **JOAO MARIO** (Por) (24) 19.01.93
44 Ivan **PERISIC** (Cro) (28) 02.02.89
20 Borja **VALERO** (Spa) (32) 12.01.85
11 Matias **VECINO** (Uru) (26) 24.08.91

FORWARDS
23 **EDER** (Ita) (30) 15.11.86
9 Mauro **ICARDI** (Arg) (24) 19.02.93
17 Yann **KARAMOH** (Fra) (19) 08.07.98
99 Andrea **PINAMONTI** (18) 19.05.99

COACH
Luciano **SPALLETTI** (58) 07.03.59

JUVENTUS

GOALKEEPERS
1 Gianluigi **BUFFON** (39) 28.01.78
16 Carlo **PINSOGLIO** (27) 16.03.90
23 Wojciech **SZCZESNY** (Pol) (27) 18.04.90

DEFENDERS
15 Andrea **BARZAGLI** (36) 08.05.81
4 Mehdi **BENATIA** (Mor) (30) 17.04.87
3 Giorgio **CHIELLINI** (33) 14.08.84
2 Mattia **DE SCIGLIO** (24) 20.10.92
21 Benedikt **HOWEDES** (Ger) (29) 29.02.88
26 Stephan **LICHTSTEINER** (Swi) (33) 16.01.84
24 Daniele **RUGANI** (23) 29.07.94
12 Alex **SANDRO** (Bra) (26) 26.01.91

MIDFIELDERS
22 Kwadwo **ASAMOAH** (Gha) (28) 09.12.88
30 Rodrigo **BENTANCUR** (Uru)(20) 05.06.97
11 Douglas **COSTA** (Bra) (27) 14.09.90
7 Juan **CUADRADO** (Col) (29) 26.05.88
6 Sami **KHEDIRA** (Ger) (30) 04.04.87
8 Claudio **MARCHISIO** (31) 19.01.86
14 Blaise **MATUIDI** (Fra) (30) 09.04.87
20 Marko **PJACA** (Cro) (22) 06.05.95
5 Miralem **PJANIC** (Bos) (27) 02.04.90
27 Stefano **STURARO** (24) 09.03.93

FORWARDS
33 Federico **BERNARDESCHI** (23) 16.02.94
10 Paulo **DYBALA** (Arg) (23) 15.11.93
9 Gonzalo **HIGUAIN** (Arg) (29) 10.12.87
17 Mario **MANDZUKIC** (Cro) (31) 21.05.86

COACH
Massimiliano **ALLEGRI** (50) 11.08.67

(ages as of 06.10.17)

LAZIO

GOALKEEPERS
23 Guido **GUERRIERI** (21) 25.02.96
22 Federico **MARCHETTI** (34) 07.02.83
1 Thomas **STRAKOSHA** (Alb)(22) 19.03.95
55 Ivan **VARGIC** (Cro) (30) 15.03.87

DEFENDERS
8 Dusan **BASTA** (Ser) (33) 18.08.84
15 **BASTOS** (Ang) (26) 23.11.91
3 Stefan **DE VRIJ** (Hol) (25) 05.02.92
5 Jordan **LUKAKU** (Blg) (23) 25.07.94
77 Adam **MARUSIC** (Mne) (24) 17.10.92
4 **PATRIC** (Spa) (24) 17.04.93
26 Stefan **RADU** (Rom) (30) 22.10.86
13 **WALLACE** (Bra) (22) 14.10.94

MIDFIELDERS
18 Luis **ALBERTO** (Spa) (25) 28.09.92
10 Felipe **ANDERSON** (Bra) (24) 15.04.93
11 Luca **CRECCO** (22) 06.09.95
88 Davide **DI GENNARO** (29) 16.06.88
70 Chris **IKONOMIDIS** (Aus) (22) 04.05.95
66 Bruno **JORDAO** (Por) (18) 12.10.98
6 **LUCAS** Leiva (Bra) (30) 09.01.87
27 **LUIZ FELIPE** (Bra) (20) 22.03.97
19 Senad **LULIC** (Bos) (31) 18.01.86
21 Sergej **MILINKOVIC-SAVIC** (Ser) (22) 27.02.95
99 Abukar **MOHAMED** (Fin) (18) 01.01.99
96 Alessandro **MURGIA** (21) 09.08.96
7 **NANI** (Por) (30) 17.11.86
16 Marco **PAROLO** (32) 25.01.85

FORWARDS
20 Felipe **CAICEDO** (Ecu) (29) 05.09.88
9 Filip **DJORDJEVIC** (Ser) (30) 28.09.87
17 Ciro **IMMOBILE** (27) 20.02.90
30 Pedro **NETO** (Por) (17) 09.03.00
29 Simone **PALOMBI** (21) 23.04.96
34 Brayan **PEREA** (Col) (24) 25.02.93

COACH
Simone **INZAGHI** (41) 05.04.76

MILAN

GOALKEEPERS
90 Antonio **DONNARUMMA** (27) 07.07.90
99 Gianluigi **DONNARUMMA** (18) 25.02.99
75 Alessandro **GUARNONE** (18) 27.03.99
30 Marco **STORARI** (40) 07.01.77

DEFENDERS
20 Ignazio **ABATE** (30) 12.11.86
31 Luca **ANTONELLI** (30) 11.02.87
19 Leonardo **BONUCCI** (30) 01.05.87
2 Davide **CALABRIA** (20) 06.12.96
12 Andrea **CONTI** (23) 02.03.94
15 Gustavo **GOMEZ** (Par) (24) 06.06.93
22 Mateo **MUSACCHIO** (Arg) (27) 26.08.90
29 Gabriel **PALETTA** (31) 15.02.86
68 Ricardo **RODRIGUEZ** (Swi)(25) 25.08.92
13 Alessio **ROMAGNOLI** (22) 12.01.95
17 Cristian **ZAPATA** (Col) (31) 30.09.86

MIDFIELDERS
21 Lucas **BIGLIA** (Arg) (31) 30.01.86
5 Giacomo **BONAVENTURA** (28) 22.08.89
10 Hakan **CALHANOGLU** (Tur)(23) 08.02.94
46 Matteo **GABBIA** (17) 21.10.99
79 Franck **KESSIE** (IvC) (20) 19.12.96
73 Manuel **LOCATELLI** (19) 08.01.98
4 Jose **MAURI** (21) 16.05.96
18 Riccardo **MONTOLIVO** (32) 18.01.85
23 Jose **SOSA** (Arg) (32) 19.06.85
45 Niccolo **ZANELLATO** (19) 24.06.98

FORWARDS
11 Fabio **BORINI** (26) 29.03.91
63 Patrick **CUTRONE** (19) 03.01.98
7 Nikola **KALINIC** (Cro) (29) 05.01.88
9 Andre **SILVA** (Por) (21) 06.11.95
8 **SUSO** (Spa) (23) 19.11.93

COACH
Vincenzo **MONTELLA** (43) 18.06.74

NAPOLI

GOALKEEPERS
1 **RAFAEL** (Bra) (27) 20.05.90
25 Pepe **REINA** (Spa) (35) 31.08.82
22 Luigi **SEPE** (26) 08.05.91

DEFENDERS
33 Raul **ALBIOL** (Spa) (32) 04.09.85
21 Vlad **CHIRICHES** (Rom) (27) 14.11.89
31 Faouzi **GHOULAM** (Alg) (26) 01.02.91
23 Elseid **HYSAJ** (Alb) (23) 02.02.94
26 Kalidou **KOULIBALY** (Fra) (26) 20.06.91
11 Christian **MAGGIO** (35) 11.02.82
19 Nikola **MAKSIMOVIC** (Ser) (25) 25.11.91
6 Mario **RUI** (Por) (26) 27.05.91
62 Lorenzo **TONELLI** (27) 17.01.90

MIDFIELDERS
5 **ALLAN** (Bra) (26) 08.01.91
42 Amadou **DIAWARA** (Gui) (20) 17.07.97
15 Emanuele **GIACCHERINI** (32) 05.05.85
17 Marek **HAMSIK** (Slk) (30) 27.07.87
8 **JORGINHO** (25) 21.12.91
18 **LEANDRINHO** (Bra) (18) 11.10.98
37 Adam **OUNAS** (Fra) (20) 11.11.96
30 Marko **ROG** (Cro) (22) 19.07.95
20 Piotr **ZIELINSKI** (Pol) (23) 20.05.94

FORWARDS
7 Jose **CALLEJON** (Spa) (30) 11.02.87
24 Lorenzo **INSIGNE** (26) 04.06.91
14 Dries **MERTENS** (Blg) (30) 06.05.87
99 Arkadiusz **MILIK** (Pol) (23) 28.02.94
27 Alessio **ZERBIN** (18) 03.03.99

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12 Andrea **ROMAGNOLI** (19) 29.07.98
28 Lukasz **SKORUPSKI** (Pol) (26) 05.05.91

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55 Leandro **CASTAN** (Bra) (30) 05.11.86
33 **EMERSON** (Bra) (23) 03.08.94
20 Federico **FAZIO** (Arg) (30) 17.03.87
5 Juan **JESUS** (Bra) (26) 10.06.91
26 Rick **KARSDORP** (Hol) (22) 11.02.95
11 Aleksandar **KOLAROV** (Ser)(31) 10.11.85
44 Kostas **MANOLAS** (Gre) (26) 14.06.91
15 Hector **MORENO** (Mex) (29) 17.01.88
2 Luca **PELLEGRINI** (18) 07.03.99
25 Bruno **PERES** (Bra) (27) 01.03.90

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16 Daniele **DE ROSSI** (34) 24.07.83
24 Alessandro **FLORENZI** (26) 11.03.91
30 **GERSON** (Bra) (20) 20.05.97
21 Maxime **GONALONS** (Fra) (28) 10.03.89
4 Radja **NAINGGOLAN** (Blg) (29) 04.05.88
7 Lorenzo **PELLEGRINI** (21) 19.06.96
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17 Cengiz **UNDER** (Tur) (20) 14.07.97

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9 Edin **DZEKO** (Bos) (31) 17.03.86
92 Stephan **EL SHAARAWY** (24) 27.10.92
8 Diego **PEROTTI** (Arg) (29) 26.07.88
14 Patrik **SCHICK** (CzR) (21) 24.01.96

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2 Emiliano **VIVIANO** (31) 01.12.85

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24 Bartosz **BERESZYNSKI** (Pol)(25) 12.07.92
6 **DODO** (Bra) (25) 06.02.92
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9 Gianluca **CAPRARI** (24) 30.07.93
99 Dawid **KOWNACKI** (Pol) (20) 14.03.97
27 Fabio **QUAGLIARELLA** (34) 31.01.83
91 Duvan **ZAPATA** (Col) (26) 01.04.91

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47 Andrea **CONSIGLI** (30) 27.01.87
70 Leonardo **MARSON** (19) 05.01.98
77 Gianluca **PEGOLO** (36) 25.03.81
76 Giacomo **SATALINO** (18) 20.05.99

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98 Claud **ADJAPONG** (19) 06.05.98
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39 Cristian **DELL'ORCO** (23) 10.02.94
23 Marcello **GAZZOLA** (32) 03.04.85
24 Edoardo **GOLDANIGA** (24) 02.11.93
55 Timo **LETSCHERT** (Hol) (24) 25.05.93
21 Pol **LIROLA** (Spa) (20) 13.08.97
13 Federico **PELUSO** (33) 20.01.84
26 **ROGERIO** (Bra) (19) 13.01.98

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8 Davide **BIONDINI** (34) 24.01.83
29 Francesco **CASSATA** (20) 16.07.97
32 Alfred **DUNCAN** (Gha) (24) 10.03.93
22 Davide **FRATTESI** (18) 22.09.99
4 Francesco **MAGNANELLI** (32) 12.11.84
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7 Simone **MISSIROLI** (31) 23.05.86
12 Stefano **SENSI** (22) 05.08.95

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11 Diego **FALCINELLI** (26) 26.06.91
10 Alessandro **MATRI** (33) 19.08.84
17 Nicholas **PIERINI** (19) 06.08.98
16 Matteo **POLITANO** (24) 03.08.93
90 Antonino **RAGUSA** (27) 27.03.90
14 Gianluca **SCAMACCA** (18) 01.01.99

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92 Gabriele **MARCHEGIANI** (21) 03.06.96
97 Alex **MERET** (20) 22.03.97
17 Giacomo **POLUZZI** (29) 25.02.88

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6 Michele **CREMONESI** (29) 15.04.88
5 Fabio **DELLA GIOVANNA** (20) 21.03.97
27 **FELIPE** (Bra) (33) 31.07.84
12 Pa **KONATE** (Swe) (23) 25.04.94
14 Federico **MATTIELLO** (22) 14.07.95
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- **RENATO** (Bra) (19) 30.05.98
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15 Sauli **VAISANEN** (Fin) (23) 05.06.94
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11 Luca **RIZZO** (25) 24.04.92
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9 Federico **BONAZZOLI** (20) 21.05.97
22 Marco **BORRIELLO** (35) 18.06.82
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99 Leonardo **UBALDI** (18) 09.07.99

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32 Vanja **MILINKOVIC-SAVIC** (Ser)(20) 20.02.97
39 Salvatore **SIRIGU** (30) 12.01.87

DEFENDERS
15 Cristian **ANSALDI** (Arg) (31) 20.09.86
23 Antonio **BARRECA** (22) 18.03.95
4 Kevin **BONIFAZI** (21) 19.05.96
67 Alessandro **BUONGIORNO**(18) 06.06.99
13 Nicolas **BURDISSO** (Arg) (36) 12.04.81
29 Lorenzo **DE SILVESTRI** (29) 23.05.88
97 **LYANCO** (Bra) (20) 01.02.97
3 Cristian **MOLINARO** (34) 30.07.83
24 Emiliano **MORETTI** (36) 11.06.81
33 Nicolas **N'KOULOU** (Cam) (27) 27.03.90

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6 Afriyie **ACQUAH** (Gha) (25) 05.01.92
8 Daniele **BASELLI** (25) 12.03.92
20 Simone **EDERA** (20) 09.01.97
16 Samuel **GUSTAFSON** (Swe) (22) 20.01.95
22 Joel **OBI** (Nga) (26) 22.05.91
88 Tomas **RINCON** (Ven) (29) 13.01.88
18 Mirko **VALDIFIORI** (31) 21.04.86

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9 Andrea **BELOTTI** (23) 20.12.93
21 Alex **BERENGUER** (Spa) (22) 04.07.95
31 Lucas **BOYE** (Arg) (21) 28.02.96
19 Manuel **DE LUCA** (19) 17.07.98
14 Iago **FALQUE** (Spa) (27) 04.01.90
10 Adem **LJAJIC** (Ser) (26) 29.09.91
11 M'Baye **NIANG** (Sen) (22) 19.12.94
99 Umar **SADIQ** (Nga) (20) 02.02.97

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25 Davide **BORSELLINI** (18) 04.01.99
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53 Ali **ADNAN** (Irq) (23) 19.12.93
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96 **EWANDRO** (Bra) (21) 15.03.96
15 Kevin **LASAGNA** (25) 10.08.92
20 Maxi **LOPEZ** (Arg) (33) 03.04.84
11 Aly **MALLE** (Mli) (19) 03.04.98
7 Ryder **MATOS** (Bra) (24) 27.02.93
18 Stipe **PERICA** (Cro) (22) 07.07.95

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1 **NICOLAS** (Bra) (29) 12.04.88
16 Marco **SILVESTRI** (26) 02.03.91

DEFENDERS
22 Matteo **BIANCHETTI** (24) 17.03.93
26 Martin **CACERES** (Uru) (30) 07.04.87
12 Antonio **CARACCIOLO** (27) 30.06.90
3 Nicolo **CHERUBIN** (30) 02.12.86
97 Gianfilippo **FELICIOLI** (19) 30.09.97
28 Alex **FERRARI** (23) 01.07.94
75 Thomas **HEURTAUX** (Fra) (29) 03.07.88
33 Marash **KUMBULLA** (Alb) (17) 08.02.00
69 Samuel **SOUPRAYEN** (Fra)(28) 18.02.89

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37 Enrico **BEARZOTTI** (20) 29.10.96
24 Daniel **BESSA** (Bra) (24) 14.01.93
77 Marcel **BUCHEL** (Lie) (26) 18.03.91
72 Andrea **DANZI** (18) 25.02.99
8 Marco **FOSSATI** (24) 05.10.92
4 Simon **LANER** (33) 28.01.84
2 **ROMULO** (Bra) (30) 22.05.87
98 Simon **STEFANEC** (Slk) (19) 05.09.98
27 Mattia **VALOTI** (24) 06.09.93
20 Mattia **ZACCAGNI** (22) 16.06.95
5 Bruno **ZUCULINI** (Arg) (24) 02.04.93
14 Franco **ZUCULINI** (Arg) (27) 05.09.90

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10 Alessio **CERCI** (30) 23.07.87
93 Mohamed **FARES** (Alg) (21) 15.02.96
9 Moise **KEAN** (17) 28.02.00
21 **LEE** Seung-Woo (SKo) (19) 06.01.98
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29 Lubomir **TUPTA** (Slk) (19) 27.03.98
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World Soccer's GREAT MATCHES

JUNE 14, 1970, LEON: WORLD CUP QUARTER-FINAL

West Germany 3 England 2

Beaten finalists four years earlier, Germany come from behind to take revenge on England in Mexico

Chance...Francis Lee (centre, dark shirt) goes close for England

Four years after they met in the World Cup Final at Wembley, West Germany and England came face-to-face again for a place in the semi-finals in Mexico.

Both teams started the match with five survivors from their 1966 encounter but, crucially, England were without their first-choice goalkeeper Gordon Banks, who was taken ill with food poisoning on the eve of the game.

"Helmut Schoen repeated the error he made in the 1966 World Cup Final when he gave his ace midfield player [Franz] Beckenbauer the job of marking Bobby Charlton," wrote Eric Batty in *World Soccer*. "This robbed the German attack of Beckenbauer's close support.

"But when Alf Ramsey pulled Bobby Charlton off, this left Beckenbauer free to come forward more – and he above all caused serious problems for England."

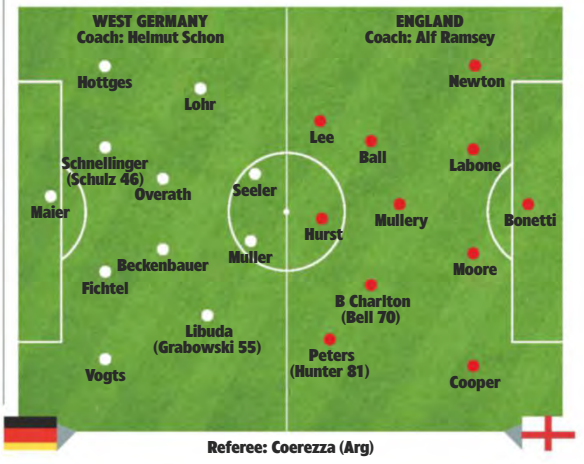
Batty continued: "Everything seemed to be going well [for England] until in the second half the machine appeared to blow a fuse.

"Winning 2-0 with more than an hour gone, three things occurred which combined within a few minutes to change the pattern of the game and the final result.

"Colin Bell replaced Bobby Charlton, Franz Beckenbauer scored for West Germany and Peter Bonetti, usually so calm and confident for Chelsea, made a basic error.

"Had Gordon Banks been in goal for England I am confident that he would have prevented both the German goals scored in ordinary time and England would have won 2-0 and passed into the semi-finals." WS

Dejected...England skipper Bobby Moore



Referee: Coerezza (Arg)

KEY MOMENTS

Fight back...Bonetti is beaten by Beckenbauer

31min Alan Mullery swaps passes with Keith Newton and scores at the near post. **0-1**

49min An overlapping Newton crosses to the far post, where Martin Peters turns the ball home. **0-2**

68min Franz Beckenbauer takes a short pass from Wolfgang Overath, runs past Mullery and hits a low shot from the edge of the area. **1-2**

70min England manager Alf Ramsey substitutes Bobby Charlton for Colin Bell.

78min An unmarked Bell crosses from the right and a diving Geoff Hurst sees his header trickle just wide of the German goal.

82min Karl-Heinz Schnellinger puts a cross into the penalty area and Uwe Seeler's looping, backward header beats Peter Bonetti. **2-2**

85min Beckenbauer exchanges passes with Gerd Muller and shoots narrowly wide.

108min Jurgen Grabowski's cross is headed back across goal by Hannes Lohr for Muller to volley home. **3-2**

118min The ball breaks to Newton on the edge of the area but his shot is tipped over the bar by Maier.

Winner...Gerd Muller scores the third

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